Tour guides, textbooks and tv's : uses and meanings of literacy in Namibia

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Abstract

In 1990, Namibia finally achieved independence from South Africa. Much has changed in the country since this landmark event. The government has invested in a huge effort of democratisation and development. One of the mainstays of this policy is the National Literacy Programme (NLPN).

A decade later, literacy has also undergone important changes. Recent debates have produced a new understanding of literacy that looks at reading and writing not so much as a technical skill, but as a social practice. The 'New Literacy Studies', to which this study makes a contribution, are at the forefront of this new scholarly orientation.

This dissertation deals with uses and meanings of literacy in various contexts of everyday life and work in Namibia. It encompasses different sets of literacy practices, like having a bank account, buying goods on credit or being a learner in the NLPN. A core section of the thesis concentrates on reading and writing in the economically increasingly important tourism industry.

Using an ethnographic approach combined with discourse analysis, the study explores how local people 'take hold' of dominant literacy practices and engage with various forms of power engendered in institutional uses of language and literacy. For a theoretical framework I use Foucault's notion of discourse, as it applies to literacy's relationship with power via knowledge, identity and governance.

This study shows that in many contexts of everyday life in Namibia, literacy serves to support and extend institutional practices and forms of power. Yet, at the same time it is used by local communities as an important individual and communal resource. In order to access resources and opportunities, learners in the NLPN, tour guides, cleaners and craft vendors build strategic alliances with the dominant institutions of society and seek access to powerful literacy practices. Yet, by doing so, they skilfully deploy their own discursive strategies and manage to appropriate and at times even to challenge hegemonic practices. In this context, individuals and communities see literacy and education as potentially powerful tools in their struggle for a better life in the new Namibian society.

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There are many people who have helped me in this research and without whose support this thesis would not exist. In different ways, each of them has made a contribution that was unique and essential to my work, my life and my physical and emotional well-being over the last three-and-a-half years. What I would want to do here is mention them all at once and at the same time, without having to enumerate them one by one, thereby creating the unwanted impression of different degrees of importance.

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The other person, without whom doing this research and writing this thesis would have been unthinkable (and most certainly undoable), is Kay who by following me to Namibia not only embarked on the adventure of his first visit to Africa. In fact we both, while I conducted fieldwork, embarked on a much bigger adventure. On 26 July 1999, as my car had once again broken down, and a few hours before I was to meet the District Literacy Officer, we got married in the Magistrate's Court of Otjiwarongo. Needless to say that I re-scheduled my meeting with the District Literacy Officer for the following day.

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Contents

Table of Figures 11

Abbreviations 13

Introduction 14

1. TVs, textbooks and tour guides: literacy practices in everyday contexts 14

2. The nature of this study 16

3. Background and context 17

4. Literacy and power: discourse and identity 19

5. Literacy, power and agency 21

6. The National Literacy Programme in Namibia 22

7. Just another description? Aims of the study 23

8. Structure of the thesis 26

Namibia and its people 28

1. Introduction 28

2. Namibia: a land of possibilities and of constraints 31

3. Namibia since independence 33

4. Language and education 35

5. Researching literacy in Namibia in the years 1999 and 2000 38

Part I: Theory and Methods

1. From Hamburg to Windhoek via London: finding a research topic 43

1. Introduction: two vignettes 43

2. Many questions 46

3. Literacies in and beyond the classroom.....50

4. From Hamburg to Windhoek via London: trajectories of change, choice and doubt 52

2. Researching literacy: theoretical considerations 57

1. Introduction.....57

2. What is a discourse? 58

3. A new understanding of literacy: reading and writing as a social and discursive practice 59

4. Literacy as discourse 64

5. Academic discourses of literacy: the New Literacy Studies 66

6. Literacy, discourse, power and identity.....68

7. Researching literacy as a social and discursive practice: methodology 72

3. Research Methods 82

1. Introduction.....82

2. Literacy events and literacy practices 82

3. Researching literacy events and literacy practices: the case study ..84

4. How to research a case: interviews, observations and other methods.....87

5. The art of understanding and the challenges of representation: data analysis, interpretation and writing.....99

6. Summary and conclusions: is my research a 'telling' case?.....104

Part II: Literacy Practices of Everyday Life

4. Everyday life literacy practices in Katutura: 'Everything is in English' 107

1. Introduction: the main sites of my study.....107

2. Katutura: from the 'Place where we do not stay' to
the 'Pulse of Windhoek' 108

3. Working as a white researcher in Katutura 113

4. Choosing field sites: beyond the literacy classes.....117

5. Street literacies 120

6. Workplace literacies, school knowledge and the role
of English for employment 125

5. Banks, loans and invoices: bureaucratic literacy practices.....141

1. Introduction: Foucault, literacy and bureaucratic power.....141

2. Bureaucratic literacy practices: the role of literacy mediators 146

3. Loan agreements as an example of the
dominant literacy practices of the state.....151

4. Banking.....154

5. Invoices 158

6. Functional versus social approaches to literacy:
bureaucratic literacy practices in the NLPN classrooms 162

6. Shopping without money: literacies of consumerism.....167

1. Introduction: 'The Foschini Personal Account.
It's How You want to Pay' 167

2. Researching credit schemes and shop accounts 168

3. Credit schemes as literacy practices 171

4. Literacy, power and identity:
how my informants experienced credit schemes 178

5. Teaching the literacy practices of credits and leasing schemes? ...182

6. Summary and conclusions:
beyond the world of bureaucracies and consumerism.....184

Part III: Literacy and Tourism

7. Speaking (and writing) the language of tourists:
Literacy practices in the tourism sector.....188

1. Introduction: why tourism?.....188

2. Overview of Chapters 7, 8 and 9.....191

3. What is there to read and write in tourism: the research questions 191

4. Introducing 'one of the most untamed and beautiful parts
of wild Africa': tourism in Namibia.....197

5. Guestbooks, price tags and cash books:
reading and writing practices of tourism workers.....203

8. Signposts, flyers and brochures: promotional literacy practices.....212

1. Introduction: 'Kunene Village Rest Camp –
The gateway to the living Epupa Falls'.....212

2. Tourist or fieldworker? Familiar perceptions
and the question of my own 'gaze'.....212

3. Promotional tourism literacy practices.....215

4. Images of culture and nature: understanding the tourist gaze
and handling the politics of representation.....220

5. 'Anmire Damara Cultural Village':
how a community-based tourism enterprise presents itself.....223

6. Tourism discourses:
authoritative voices and dominant literacy practices.....228

7. The role of local knowledge in tourism discourses.....231

8. Conclusions: otherness=diversity?
Or, is tourism a homogenising force? 232

9. Global, national, local: tourism literacy practices and the legal and political framework of tourism development in Namibia.....236

1. Introduction.....236

2. Legal literacy practices: the Permission to Occupy.....237

3. The political framework of tourism development in Namibia: Face-to-Face Tours' experience with the Windhoek Municipality 239

4. Training and professionalisation: formalising local tourism literacy practices and local tourism knowledge.....244

5. Certificates and badges: literacy as display.....249

6. Tourism, literacy and the New Work Order.....251

7. More than the 'noble savage': what is the relationship between local tourism and the power of dominant tourism literacies? 258

8. Tourism literacy practices in Namibia: summary and conclusions..264

Part IV: Literacies 'inside' and 'outside'

10. A school for adults? Literacy practices in the NLPN.....267

1. Introduction.....267

2. Literacy – your key to a better future?
The discursive framework of the NLPN 268

3. Reading the bible: literacy and religious discourses 275

4. Tests, homework and exams: school practices in the NLPN.....285

11. Classrooms, craft shops and credit letters:
literacy practices 'inside' and 'outside'.....297

1. Introduction.....297

2. The role literacy played in my informants' lives 298

3. Internalisation or strategic alignment? 303

4. The importance of education for people's identities.....307

5. Conclusions: People's own agendas and their reactions to dominant discourses.....310

Conclusions.....315

1. Local and dominant literacy practices in Katutura and elsewhere in Namibia: theoretical implications.....316

2. Implications for methodology 320

3. Links with policy and practice: the NLPN.....321

4. Links with policy and practice: tourism and literacy 326

Bibliography 330

Annex.....358

1. Timetable of my research activities in Namibia.....358

2. List of field sites 360

3. List of main informants.....362

4. Interview schedules 365

Table of Figures

Figure 4.1: House in Katutura.....112

Figure 4.2: Coca-Cola signs in Katutura.....122

Figure 4.3: Graffiti in Katutura.....122

Figure 4.4: A signboard in the township of Opuwo, Kaokoveld.....123

Figure 5.1: Pages 1 and 2 of the application form
for a loan from the MLRGH.....149

Figure 5.2: Deposit slip of a Namibian bank 156

Figure 5.3: Ana's invoice 159

Figure 5.4: Page 10 from 'Basic English', learners' textbook, Stage 3 164

Figure 6.1: Letter from Jet to Emma 173

Figure 7.1: Martha and her income book.....206

Figure 7.2: Signpost outside the craft centre 209

Figure 7.3: Literacy practices in the crafts centre 209

Figure 8.1: Signpost for the Khowarib Community Campsite 217

Figure 8.2: Signboard in Kaokoveld.....217

Figure 8.3: Signboard in Kavango 218

Figure 8.4: Signboard of a private lodge.....219

Figure 8.5: Flyer, Face-to-Face Tours 221

Figure 8.6: Signpost for the Anmire Cultural Village 225

Figure 8.7: Anmire's leaflet (front) 226

Figure 8.7: Anmire's leaflet (back).....226

Figure 9.1: Pages 1 and 2 of the application form for a PTO.....238

Figure 9.2: Signpost for the Kunene Village Rest Camp 262

Figure 10.1: Anna's copy of the Our Father.....278

Figure 10.2: Pages 7 and 8 from the Primary Health Care textbook Monica's class used 289

Figure 10.3: Hertha's certificate.....291

Abbreviations

AUPE Adult Upper Primary Education (Stages 4-7 of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia)

CBTE Community-based tourism enterprise

DABE Directorate of Adult Basic Education

MBEC Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (renamed Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture in 2000)

MET Ministry of Environment and Tourism

MLRGH Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing

MLRR Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation

NACOBTA Namibian Community-Based Tourism Association

NATH Namibian Academy for Tourism and Hospitality

NHE National Housing Enterprise

NLPN National Literacy Programme in Namibia

NLS New Literacy Studies

DLO District Literacy Officer

PTO Permission to Occupy

RLO Regional Literacy Officer

SWAPO South West Africa People's Organisation

INTRODUCTION

1. TVs, textbooks and tour guides: literacy practices in everyday contexts

This dissertation deals with uses and meanings of literacy in various contexts of everyday life and work in Namibia. The main purpose of the study is to describe and to understand how different people in Namibia make use of reading and writing in everyday life, at their workplace, when they go shopping, visit the bank, or sit in an English literacy class.

But how is the title meant to be read? What do TVs, textbooks and tour guides stand for? To begin with, this is not a study about TVs, nor is it an analysis of textbooks or a case study of tourism workers. However, buying a TV, reading a textbook and working as a tour guide are social activities which have in common that they involve the use of written texts.

But neither is this a dissertation about texts alone or about the ability to code and decode words and sentences. Nor is it a study about literacy education, or about how people can be taught to read and write texts. While all these aspects undoubtedly play a role in my research, the focus is a different one.

In a nutshell, this is a study about what people do with reading and writing and how they value it. It deals with a range of social and economic activities all of which involve people using different texts for communication via oral and written means.

Texts, and communication around texts, are amongst the most common paraphernalia of everyday life, from road signs and billboards to price tags,

invoices, newspapers and milk cartons. This is no different in a country like Namibia, despite an official rate of illiteracy that in 1998 declared about one quarter of the population to be incapable of reading and writing (Kweka and Jeremiah-Namene 1999)[1]. Chapter 4 contains a number of photographs taken in Katutura, Windhoek's former black township. As the pictures show, writing is a frequent activity in Katutura which has a rich literacy environment.

TVs, textbooks and tour guides capture the three broad areas of social activities that I argue are salient for reading and writing in Namibia and that form the focus of my study. 'TVs' stand for shopping and buying goods such as TV sets or lounge settees on credit. Shopping on credit also relates to customer letters, payment reminders and credit application forms. 'Textbooks' stand for the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN) and for the learners whom I met in this programme. Lastly, 'tour guides' are the friendly people who await foreign visitors at many of Namibia's astounding natural and cultural attractions. They live in urban townships or in the remote rural areas of Namibia and strive to make an income from the newly developing tourism industry. Contrary to what might be expected, these tour guides not only talk, but read and write as well. They study travel guides and botanical books, write leaflets and create signboards which they put up to attract visitors to their services.

Understanding a payment reminder or writing a leaflet are examples of what others have called the 'social uses of literacy' (Prinsloo and Breier 1996), or 'literacy practices' (Street 1884, 1993a, 1999, 2001a; Barton and Hamilton 1998, 2000). Both phrases seek to draw attention to the embeddedness of reading and writing in social activities, cultural values and ideological purposes.

My study looks at such social uses of literacy. The starting point for my research and the place were I met many of my informants was the National

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[1] This figure is based on the assumption that people who have been to school for less than four years have to be regarded as illiterate.

Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN). From there, I extended my research into various areas of everyday life and work. I was particularly interested in uses of reading and writing in institutional and commercial contexts. A core section of the study concentrates on uses of literacy in the tourism industry, a growing sector of the Namibian economy.

The main argument I put forward in this thesis is that in everyday social life in Namibia literacy is associated with the power of dominant institutions and is embedded in hierarchical social and economic relationships. In many contexts of daily life and work, literacy is intertwined with struggles to obtain and control resources and with moves to impose cultural values and political ideologies. Specific literacy practices have variable meanings according to the way they are embedded in such struggles. It follows from this that different literacy practices have different degrees of social power. It is my argument in this thesis that if we want to understand what literacy is about, we have to attend to these power dimensions and to the 'situated' nature of all literacy practices (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000). In the chapters that follow this introduction, I demonstrate a way to do this by eliciting the role of literacy in sustaining or challenging the specific power relations that exist in each sphere of social activity which I included in my study. Furthermore, I show that in doing this we have to attend to the way literacy is linked to the creation and dissemination of social identities. In my case, these are the new social identities that arise with the changing lifestyles and material conditions of post-independence and post-apartheid Namibia.

2. The nature of this study

This thesis is hinged on the simple assumption that in order to understand what literacy is about it is best to look at how it is used. Accordingly, its research methodology is based on the premise that in order to find out what people do with literacy, the researcher needs both to observe such literacy uses and also to ask people about them.

Translated into academic terms, this is to say that the research out of which this dissertation emerged adopted an ethnographic perspective (Bloome and Green 1997). To use this label is to characterise my work in several ways. Firstly, it is a study about particular people and their specific ways of using and understanding reading and writing. It attempts to describe a selected number of literacy practices as they were used by a small group of people in contemporary Namibia [2]. Secondly, it is located in a particular space and time, Namibia in the years 1999 and 2000. Thirdly, its outcome is a mediated text, based on an outsider's interpretation of other people's literacy experiences. Fourthly, it does not aim at empirical generalisability, but at conceptual insights. And, finally, although a large part of the text is located in Namibia's National Literacy Programme, the NLPN, this thesis is not a policy analysis, nor a study of literacy and second language acquisition, nor an evaluation of the NLPN.

3. Background and context

It is necessary to explain in a few more words the relationship of this study to literacy education and literacy policy. At the same time, I will clarify how I conceptualise the connections between uses and meanings of literacy 'outside', that is, in everyday life, and the way literacy is used 'inside', that is, in the literacy groups of the NLPN.

The debate around literacy and post-literacy education in the so-called developing world has been an on-going 'hot' topic in national and international development and research circles since the beginning of large scale development interventions after the Second World War. Various models of provision have been experimented with and found the support of multinational agencies and national governments. Yet, with a few notable exceptions, adult literacy campaigns and programmes have encountered recurrent problems

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[2] A list of my informants is provided in the annex.

and had limited success (see for example Abadzi 1996; Rassool 1999; Street 2001b; UNESCO 1997a; Wagner 1994 and 2000).

More recently, the dominance of neo-liberal growth models in national and international policy-making and the concern for human resource development and economic competitiveness has led to adult education policies becoming increasingly formalised and standardised[3]. This is also the case in Namibia where shortly after independence the new government set up the 'National Literacy Programme in Namibia' (NLPN), a large-scale centralised system of adult education which is equivalent to formal schooling.

Yet growing disillusion with the feasibility of such large-scale programmes and a strong critique of the formalised, skills-based approach has led many practitioners and researchers to look for alternative models to the commonly used school-based and 'functional' models (Verhoeven 1994). Such critique has not yet been widespread in Namibia, but has been voiced by researchers in neighbouring countries where similar developments have taken place[4].

Recent debates among researchers reflect such criticism. These have resulted in a re-conceptualisation of literacy and suggest an alternative view to mainstream literacy research and practice that remain locked in pedagogic discourses and skills-based perspectives. The 'New Literacy Studies' (Street 1993a; Gee 1996), in which I locate my own work, are at the forefront of this new scholarly orientation that highlights the idea of literacy not as a technical skill, but as a social practice.

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[3] This is probably best illustrated by the criteria used in the OECD's Adult Literacy Survey (OECD 1995). Walters' (1997) edited volume contains a number of papers from both developing and developed countries that comment on the recent changes in adult education policies towards a more skills-based and standardised provision. Hamilton's, Macrae's and Tett's (2001) overview of the development of adult education policies in the countries of the UK and Ireland highlight similar changes towards a skills-based approach.

[4] See for example Kell (2001) for South Africa and Youngman (1997) for Botswana.

The question whether literacy learners can and do make use of their new skills has been an underlying concern in the above debates. I argue that much of the discussion so far has been locked in a narrow framework, having paid insufficient attention to the uses of reading and writing in daily life. Furthermore, conventional research into adult literacy has failed to unveil the deeper conceptions of reading and writing evidenced not only by government discourse but also in learners' own understandings and adaptations of literacy.

In this research, I try to broaden and to deepen the focus of attention while at the same time not losing the connection with the literacy programme. In particular, I am concerned with individual and societal discourses about literacy. My argument is that by merely looking at instrumental uses of literacy, without an understanding of the cultural and ideological models that underpin them, we cannot understand what makes some literacy practices more powerful and more sought after than others. The main questions I ask are the following: how do people react to and take up new forms of reading and writing and new forms of texts? These include both new literacy practices in everyday life as well as those that are offered by the NLPN. And, what are the implications for how we conceptualise and design literacy programmes?

4. Literacy and power: discourse and identity

When discussing different ways of using reading and writing, what springs to attention is that these literacies are not all the same. There are, as I will show, in Namibia, as much as elsewhere in the world, a range of influential social and institutional structures, hegemonic policies and discourses that render some ways of reading and writing more powerful than others (Prinsloo and Breier 1996). Examples I discuss in this thesis are the bureaucratic forms of the Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing, the electricity bills from the Windhoek Municipality or the promotional leaflets produced by local tour guides. But what do such 'dominant literacies' (Street 1995,

Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Barton and Hamilton 1998) consist of? And how do they work?

In order to understand how different literacy practices are imbued with different degrees of social power I have developed a conceptual framework that links culture and ideology with material and economic conditions and practices. In order to construct this link, I rely on the concept of discourse, as developed by Michel Foucault, and its relationship with power via the construction and negotiation of identity.

From a Foucauldian perspective (Foucault 1977, 1980, 1982, 1988a and b), in contemporary societies and political systems power is not necessarily directly coercive and does not only emanate from the state. To a large extent, it relies on the hegemony of cultural models promoted by the state, by the economy and by society at large. These new modes of governance are rooted in the ability of policies to shape the way people construct and conduct themselves. Through the promotion of societal discourses, policies impact on people's sense of self, so that they themselves, not necessarily consciously, contribute to the hegemony of new social practices and identities (Shore and Wright 1995). Foucault (1988b) refers to this process as 'governmentality'. What we deal with here are forms of domination that work through the discursive power of policies and lifestyles. Because governmentality refers to the contact between outside domination and an internal process of identification, the concept of identity becomes central for our understanding of these contemporary forms of power. In this thesis I show that by focusing on discourse, in its relation to the creation, the dissemination and the negotiation of specific social roles, the extent to which my informants consented to new social models and policies can be revealed. Focussing on a 'bottom-up' perspective, however, Foucault's understanding of power allowed me to look at the opposite tendency, namely the re-negotiation and appropriation of dominant cultural models by individuals and groups. My focus in this thesis is on the role of literacy in both these processes: roughly 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'.

In today's world, then, power is exercised through various mundane practices, from bureaucratic forms and invoices, to shop advertisements and TV programmes. The role of literacy in extending, normalising and challenging power can best be researched at this micro-level, by attending to specific uses and meanings of reading and writing and how these are embedded in discourses and social relationships. In this thesis, I am particularly concerned with the way the people with whom I worked reacted to and took up new forms of reading and writing that are part and parcel of new economic practices, as for example in tourism. Furthermore, I am interested in literacy's relationship to new cultural models and practices, such as modern consumerism. In all these contexts, literacy was inextricably linked with struggles over economic and cultural resources and with how my informants positioned themselves vis-à-vis others in society.

It is further my argument that the above perspective can help us to understand the exceptional significance of 'schooled' (Cook-Gumpertz 1986; Street and Street 1991) or formal literacy not only in western societies, but in countries such as Namibia that currently undergo a process of modernisation and cultural transformation which in many ways follows the path of the West.

5. Literacy, power and agency

In this thesis, I give various accounts of dominant literacy practices as they are embedded in particular institutional structures and backed up by powerful social discourses. What happens when such dominant literacy practices enter the sphere of local communities? How did my informants react to the new literacies of the state and the market? Did they reject such literacies and the social practices they were part of? Or, did they actively engage with these and transform them, as they sought to benefit from the social and economic resources these have to offer?

My study challenges mainstream views about local people as the passive recipients of new literacy practices, or even as resisting change. Instead, it

highlights the many varied and complex ways in which my informants, poor black Namibians, many of whom had low levels of formal education, sought to access and 'seize hold' of new forms of literacy (Kulick and Stroud 1993: 55). But my research also describes the difficulties they encountered when trying to appropriate dominant literacy practices in order to submit them to their own local and personal agendas.

Furthermore, my thesis illustrates that those who learn new literacy practices not only acquire complex language and discourse abilities, but also take on new identities. The power of dominant literacy practices, exemplified by the credit schemes of department stores and the literacy practices of the NLPN, is inextricably linked to the emergence of new lifestyles and identities. It is related to the way my informants saw themselves as living in an environment that provided them with identities which they were often compelled to take up. The context within which I analyse these processes of identification (cf. Holland, D. et al. 1998) is a society that is currently undergoing radical social and economic change, but also witnessing the continuation and polarisation of existing class- and race-related inequalities.

6. The National Literacy Programme in Namibia

In this thesis I use the same theoretical framework to study both literacy in everyday life as well as in the government's national literacy programme. By doing so, I raise important questions regarding Namibia's national literacy programme.

My thesis takes up the criticism of large-scale centralised programmes for failing to address the many ways in which people use reading and writing in everyday life (such criticism is for example voiced in Prinsloo and Breier 1996 and Street 2001a). While not totally rejecting these critiques I wish to take a slightly different stance.

An important aspect that is largely missing in previous studies is how the meanings and uses of literacy in everyday life, as they are part of people's

lifeworld, transfer into a teaching context. Following learners in and out of the NLPN, this is the question I tried to address in my research. How did my informants' prior experiences with and their understandings of literacy shape the kind of knowledge they expected to gain from a literacy programme? And, how did they engage with that programme?

As I raise this question, I will show that a programme such as the NLPN may be more flexible and more responsive to learners' own literacy practices than it appears to be. Furthermore, I argue that in addition to taking account of everyday life uses of literacy, programme planners need to gain an understanding of the meanings literacy has for potential learners. In particular, the significance of formal education, at least in Namibia, needs to be taken into account. Otherwise, what may be conceptualised as an alternative programme, risks ending up being another imposition of a pre-selected group of literacy practices.

7. Just another description? Aims of the study

The New Literacy Studies have produced an upsurge in ethnographies of literacy practices in various communities, at the home and the workplace (see for example Heath 1983; Street 1993b and 2001b; Doronila 1996; Prinsloo and Breier 1996; Barton and Hamilton 1998; Kalman 1999). Undoubtedly, these studies have provided invaluable insights into the social and situated nature of literacy. However, their particularistic approach is cause for their limitation in terms of generalisability (Besnier 1999) and, I would add, cross-cultural comparativity.

What, then, does my thesis hope to achieve? Is it just another description of literacy practices in local and, in my case, 'exotic' contexts? Besnier (ibid.) suggests that a recent current in research on literacy has found a way out of the dilemma of particularity. These studies, he argues, look at particular literacy practices as articulations or re-enactments of the larger structures in which they are embedded. In doing so, they discuss issues which have

salience across countries and cultures: the role of literacy in relation to the 'dynamics of domination and resistance, structure and agency and reproduction and change' (ibid.: 137).

It is in this light that I see the contribution of my own study to a range of questions that, albeit emerging from the particular context of post-independence Namibia, are relevant for our theoretical understanding of literacy across countries and contexts. These regard the relationship of written representations to new forms of institutional and social power, to struggles over resources and to the negotiation of new social roles.

Collins and Blot, who equally address the 'universalist/particularist impasse' (forthcoming: 6) of the New Literacy Studies, suggest a similar linking of literacy studies to such broader sociological questions. They criticise the NLS for insufficiently addressing the central role of literacy in relation to power and to imposed social identities. These are important questions which, although having been recognised by a number of researchers in the NLS, nevertheless need much further investigation.

It is precisely this relationship of literacy to dominant social discourses and institutional practices and to social identities which will be at the centre of this thesis.

With this thesis, then, I wish to contribute to the field of literacy studies in four ways.

First, I offer an account of literacy practices in areas which have previously not been researched in any detail, notably in the areas of tourism and consumerism.

Second, I wish to contribute to the theoretical understanding of reading and writing practices by highlighting their embeddedness in personal and societal discourses and their link with identity.

Third, my thesis demonstrates the relevance of a more historical approach, taking into account the way literacy is implicated in ongoing processes of individual and societal transformation (ibid.). Identities, in this

view, are always in transition and so are the cultural models, or the discourses, against which people assess and assert their own identity (Gee 1999). At the heart of my thesis are a small group of people who moved between different sectors of activity and changing ways of life. As part of these movements, they not only came in contact with new forms of text and communication, their reading and writing was also part of their ongoing struggle for self-understanding and self-making. While I do not want to suggest that literacy studies have been blind to these questions, I believe that such a perspective can improve our understanding of the many ways in which literacy practices are suffused with power. The specific contribution this thesis makes, then, is to show how literacy is part and parcel of people's ongoing struggles over economic and cultural resources, serving as both a constraining force and a potential instrument for change. This latter point includes attempts to control the definition and dissemination of literacy itself which need to be understood as part of these broader social and economic struggles.

Finally, I hope to show that in today's globalised world, literacy studies have to deal with a context that is increasingly broad and complex. This is best illustrated by my work on literacy and tourism. Tourism, as a global industry, is a particularly 'telling case' (Mitchell 1984: 239) with which to illustrate the new forms of economic and cultural domination that have emerged alongside with increased globalisation (cf. Gee, Hull and Lanksheer 1996; Gee and Lanksheer 1997; Holland, C. et al. 1998; Gee 2000). In the new global economic and cultural context, the literacy practices of the local tourism workers, with whom I worked in this study, were directly affected by changes in the global tourism industry. Given these changed economic and political conditions, I suggest that the New Literacy Studies need to focus their attention on the links between global and local literacies. My case study on tourism demonstrates these connections. By doing so, I hope not only to contribute to literacy studies, but also to offer an original literacy-oriented account of tourism.

8. Structure of the thesis

This thesis divides into four parts, excluding introduction and conclusions. Following this introduction, a short section entitled 'Namibia and its people' provides the reader with background information about Namibia and introduces some of the people with whom I worked in this research.

In Part I the focus is on theoretical issues and research methods. In Chapter 1, I present the main research questions and discuss how these emerged as central concerns during my fieldwork and were later re-examined when I began to write this thesis.

In Chapter 2, I develop my concept of literacy as a social and discursive practice and introduce the methodological principles that have guided my research. In Chapter 3, I present the research methods I used, namely participant observation and interviews, document analysis and photographs. This is followed by a brief discussion of the processes of analysis, interpretation and representation that are at the heart of this thesis.

Part II deals with everyday life literacy practices. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 deal with institutional and commercial literacy practices in Katutura, the former black township of Windhoek. As I describe examples of everyday life literacies, I retell the experiences of learners whom I met in the NLPN and who invited me to follow them in their regular dealings with shops, bills, credits and loan applications. The first of these ethnographic accounts, Chapter 4, contains a short description of my fieldwork in Katutura, followed by a section on 'street literacies' and a discussion of reading and writing practices at the workplace. In Chapter 5, I look at bureaucratic literacies, from applications forms and bank slips to invoices. Chapter 6 deals with credit application forms, payment reminders, shop cards and buying a TV set on credit.

In Part III the focus is on tourism and literacy. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 contain my case study of tourism literacy practices. In Chapter 7, I introduce my research questions and present a range of tourism related literacy practices.

In Chapter 8, I turn to a specific set of literacy practices that are common in tourism: leaflets, brochures and signs. In Chapter 9, I continue to analyse various tourism literacy practices, but I now draw upon the broader social and political framework, both national and global, that impinges on tourism development in Namibia.

In Part IV I examine literacies 'inside', i.e. in the NLPN, and 'outside', i.e. in everyday life and work. Chapter 10 takes me right into the literacy classes of the NLPN. The chapter begins with a description of the NLPN's own discourses of literacy. I then enter three different literacy classes and examine how in these classes learners' own views of literacy and their own literacy practices interacted with and challenged the policy discourses of the NLPN. In Chapter 11, the last chapter of this thesis, I bring together the discussion of literacy in everyday life and work with an understanding of how reading and writing proceeded in the classrooms of the NLPN.

The thesis ends with a brief conclusion in which I take up the theoretical, the methodological and the practical implications of my work.

NAMIBIA AND ITS PEOPLE

1. Introduction

It is time to begin to tell the reader more about Namibia and the people with whom I worked in this research.

Namibia, often called the 'last colony', finally achieved independence from South Africa in 1990. Much has changed in the country since this landmark event. In November 1989, for the first time democratic elections were held. The South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), the former liberation movement, won with an impressive majority and formed the new government. Since then, SWAPO has consolidated its power. It now holds a two-third majority in parliament, the main legislative body.

But what is the context of this 'new Namibia', as I have come to call it? There are two ways to answer this question and in this introductory chapter, I try to combine both. One way is to provide a rather dispassionate summary of the political and economic situation that characterises Namibia eleven years after attaining independence. Another way to tell what could be the same story, but turns out to be quite a different account, is to recount the stories of the people whom I met in Namibia and who worked with me in this research.

Let me begin with some sketches.

In 1993, Irmela, a 23-year-old woman, left her home in Ovamboland, in the North of Namibia. Ovamboland is one of most densely populated areas of Namibia and the region most affected by the liberation war. Irmela came to Windhoek, because she had three children to take care of and 'no milk to buy'

for them[1]. In Windhoek, she found a job as a cleaner in the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sports.

When Justus moved to Windhoek in 1952, he began to work as a handyman for the government's water company. At work, he was the only Khoekhoegowab-speaker. Because all his fellow workers were Ovambo-speakers, he learned to speak their language. Many years later, in 1999, now retired and an active member of his church, Justus was a regular participant in one of the NLPN's English literacy classes. Three evenings a week, he learned how to speak, read and write in English. His goal was to read the bible in English.

Emma, divorced, with two children, worked as a cleaner in a primary school in Windhoek. Both her children attended a boarding school in Kamanjab, in Damaraland, 400 miles north-west of the capital. Like Irmela, Emma left her home in Kamanjab to find a job in the capital. In Windhoek, Emma lived in Katutura, the former black township. Her home was a small shack made of metal sheets that she built for herself in the backyard of a friend's house. Having a regular job means that Emma was comparatively well off. But her salary was low and living in Windhoek was expensive. Emma never really had enough money to pay for the school fees and for all the things she and her children needed. If she could, Emma did not pay in cash, but used the credit schemes offered by most of Windhoek's chain shops.

Salomon never went to school. In 1992, he began to work as a tour guide at Twyfelfontein. His job was to show visitors the beautiful rock engravings of the area, most of which date back more than 6,000 years ago. When he began to work as a guide, Salomon already knew German which he had learned while he worked on the farm of a German-speaking Namibian. Later, as a tour guide, he also learned to speak English.

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[1] Interview with Irmela, Windhoek, 21.7.2000, original in English, with occasional translations from Oshindonga.

Since the tin mine in Uis, a small town near the Brandberg in central Namibia, was closed in 1991, there was almost no income for the people of Uis. Families struggled to make ends meet. In 1996, a group of women and men from the community set up a centre for contemporary crafts. Elisabeth, now the manager of the group, was one of them. Dhaureb Crafts produces picture frames, mirrors and fridge magnets, using waste materials and decorated with motifs from the Brandberg's famous collection of rock paintings. But life is still far from easy. Sometimes, the tourists do not come and the monthly income of the group can go down to almost nothing. Many of the founding members left the centre, because they felt it could not provide them with a sufficient income. Others, like Elisabeth, have stayed on and continue to produce crafts. She and her colleagues spend much time trying to improve their products. They invent new designs and new motifs which they hope will appeal to the tastes of the tourists.

When Israel had finished secondary school, he could not find a job. Like many others, he ended up working as a taxi driver, taking tourists from the airport to their hotels in Windhoek. His clients often asked him about the city. They wanted to know about life in Namibia since the end of South African rule. Some even wanted to see where he lived and hired him to take them to Katutura. This is how the idea came up. In the summer of 1999, Israel and several of his friends and family opened a small tour guide business, 'Katutura Face-to-Face Tours'. The group takes visitors to the township, shows them its street markets, its bars and neighbourhood shops and even gets them to see a real 'homestead', an ordinary person's house and home in Katutura.

Irmela, Emma, Israel, Justus and Salomon are some of the people who were my informants in this research. I have chosen these sketches of their lives in order to illustrate an aspect that is central to the discussion of literacy in this thesis. As their stories will reveal, the new times in Namibia have brought a range of new social, administrative and economic activities that engender new forms of literacy and language. As people everywhere in

Namibia get involved in these new practices, be it shopping on credit, reading the bible in English or watching TV, they engage with new ways of reading and writing. They do so in order to pursue opportunities and fulfil desires, to create new lives and future possibilities. As they 'seize hold' (Kulick and Stroud 1993:55) of new literacy practices, they acquire new social identities.

But the above takes place in a context that is shaped by a historical legacy of underdevelopment, racial discrimination and a grossly unequal distribution of resources and opportunities that prevails in the new times. In many ways, as Justus told me, nothing has changed[2]. Economically, he said, the majority of the black and coloured Namibians are not much better off than they used to be when the country was still governed by South Africa. What, then, is the context of this new Namibia?

2. Namibia: a land of possibilities and of constraints

Namibia is situated in south-western Africa, north-west of South Africa. Its northern neighbours are Angola and Zambia, in the east it is bounded by Botswana. The country has a total surface of 317,818 square miles, with one of the lowest population densities in Africa. The total population, according to recent estimates is 1.8 million, living in a country that is four times as big as Germany. Windhoek, the capital and biggest city, is estimated to have about 220,000 inhabitants.

Namibia is an extremely dry country, 78% of the land is classified as arid. Lack of water is the main factor that restricts agricultural production in the country. Most of the land can only support livestock. Only the far North and North-East are suitable for crop cultivation.

The small population is ethnically and racially highly diverse. The census of 1991 recognised eleven ethnic groups: Baster, Caprivians, Coloured, Damara, Herero, Kavango, Nama, Ovambo, San, Tswana and Whites. There

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[2] Interview with Justus, Katutura, 20.6.2000, translated from Khoekhoegowab.

are three major linguistic groups in Namibia: Bantu, Khoisan and European. According to the Population and Housing Census of 1991, 50.6% of the population are Ovambo-speakers, making this Bantu language a majority language (Puetz 1995a). Other important language groups are Kavango, spoken by 9.6% of the population and Herero, spoken by 8% of the total Namibian population. The Ovambo and Kavango groups both have several dialects.

Afrikaans is the first language of 9.5% of the Namibian population. At the time of the census, the German-speaking population made up 0.9% of the total population. English, the official language of Namibia, is spoken as a mother tongue by about 10,000 people, 0.8% of the population.

Colonialism formally began in Namibia when Germany, Namibia's first coloniser, established its rule over the country beginning in 1881. After Germany lost its colonies in the treaty of Versailles, Namibia was mandated by the then League of Nation to South Africa. What was originally classified as a mandate, soon became a de facto colony of South Africa, despite the repeated refusal by the United Nations to accept South Africa's plea to incorporate Namibia into the territory of the South African union. Although the UN had passed its first resolution to terminate South Africa's mandate over Namibia as early as in 1966, it was not before 1990 that the country finally achieved independence.

SWAPO, founded in 1960, began its armed struggle against South Africa in 1966. It was a small guerrilla war, limited to the Ovambo country in the North and parts of Angola, and in itself would never have been able to bring about victory over South Africa. In the end, independence was achieved due to SWAPO's persistent diplomatic efforts at the United Nations and a political compromise that had been made possible by a combination of factors. These included changes within South Africa itself and in the global political context, namely the end of the Cold War and its effects on international foreign policy.

Racial segregation began in Namibia as early as during the German colonisation and was continued by the South Africans. Apartheid was a reality

in Namibia as much as in South Africa. The Bantu education system was introduced in Namibia in 1964. Four years later, when the South African homeland system was introduced, the reserves that had previously existed were regrouped into homelands. The contract system, which was set up in reply to the growing need for labour, particularly in the mining areas of the South, remained in effect until the 1970s. In 1977, the pass laws, that had previously hindered the migrant workers from permanently settling in the South or the Centre where they were hired to work, were repealed.

3. Namibia since independence

The end of colonialism was not achieved for free. The main structures of distribution of the old regime remained untouched. The white settlers retained their huge commercial farms. By and large, the economic power of the white minority remained unchanged.

With the help of international aid, the government embarked on a huge effort of development and reconstruction, aiming to abolish the former inequalities and to broaden the chances of economic and social wellbeing for all. A policy of national reconciliation has been implemented with the hope of bringing together the severely divided population. However, the Namibian government has declined any proposals for a process similar to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

The general political and economic path chosen is based on a mixed economy, with a strong reliance on the private sector and the creation of legal and political conditions that favour foreign investment. Once in power, SWAPO abandoned the former policies of socialist transformation and redistribution that had been, at least rhetorically, endorsed when it was still leading its battle against the South African occupier.

Overall, economic growth, although undoubtedly having taken place in the last eleven years, has been limited to the extractive industries and has had little positive effect on the wider economy (Hansohm 2000). Unemployment

remains high and advances in achieving a more equitable income distribution have been slow. As a society, Namibia is still shaped by the legacy of its inherited social inequalities and the presence of antagonistic social classes (Melber 2000).

Colonial history left Namibia with a severely divided agricultural sector, marked by the gap between the capital intensive export-oriented livestock farming of the white settlers and the mainly subsistence-based agriculture of the black population.

The land question is one of the main sources of structural conflict in Namibia. In the former homelands, nowadays turned into communal lands and constituting 41% of the Namibian territory, land legally belongs to the state and no private ownership is possible. In the commercial areas, that cover 44% of the total surface, around 4,300 farms are privately owned, the overwhelming majority by white Namibians. This unequal distribution of assets is one of the factors that causes widespread poverty. Against the 4,300 commercial farmers owning close to half of the land, in the communal lands, vast areas of which cannot be used because of lack of water, an estimated 150,000 farmers strive to make a living (Schade 2000).

Recent developments in Zimbabwe had an impact on public opinion in Namibia. From the beginning, the government had rejected radical land appropriations, but had promised to purchase land from absentee landlords willing to sell. However, until 1999, very little farmland had been purchased and the government was increasingly under attack for its slow redistribution policy (Werner 2000). A further controversial question, which has not been tackled, is the possibility of creating leasehold titles to communal lands. While this legal question remains unresolved, the illegal fencing of communal lands is becoming increasingly widespread.

Many of the communal areas suffer from aridity and desertification, making the prospects of an adequate income through small-scale farming increasingly difficult. Other areas, like Ovambo, where Irmela comes from, although more fertile, suffer from overcrowding. Because of the lack of

income opportunities and job prospects in the rural areas, many people leave their rural homes to seek work in the urban centres. Although people in the urban areas are slightly better off than the population of the rural parts (Schade 2000), in Windhoek, many nevertheless struggle to make a living. The formal sector of the City's economy has limited employment to offer, in particular for those with minimal formal qualifications.

Since independence, the public sector has become one of the main providers of employment. To a considerable degree, the existence of a new black middle class is the result of employment by the government (Bauer 1998). However, as public expenditure stretches to its limits and critique of the overblown state apparatus has grown in the country, the government is now attempting to limit employment in the public administration.

The mainstay of the Namibian economy is mining. Particularly important are diamonds and uranium. Agriculture and tourism are the second and third largest contributor to the GNP. Despite attempts to develop the manufacturing sector, to date it remains extremely small. Namibia is closely tied to the South African economy. About 90% of all goods used in Namibia are imported from South Africa.

4. Language and education

Prior to independence, Afrikaans (together with English) was the official language and the idiom most widely used by the administration. At independence, English was made the official language of the country. In the years of South African rule, particularly in the 1950s and 60s, Afrikaans was actively promoted and became the main lingua franca in Namibia, particularly in the central and southern parts of the country (Maho 1998). Throughout the period of South African rule, Afrikaans was also the main language of literacy in schools (Harlech-Jones 1990) and thus was learnt by many black Namibians. It was, and still is, an important language of interethnic

communication, in particular between Bantu- and Khoisan-speakers and between white and black Namibians. However, Afrikaans is much more commonly spoken in the central and southern parts of the country than in the North.

As the language of the coloniser, Afrikaans was associated with the white supremacy and increasingly symbolised the oppressive apartheid system. At the same time, English gradually began to be seen as the language of liberation. SWAPO promoted English as its chosen language and had designated it to become the official language in an independent Namibia. SWAPO's literacy and basic education campaign for refugees in Angola and Zambia used English as its sole medium of instruction (cf. Ellis 1984).

The Bantu Education system, that was implemented in Namibia after 1964, reinforced the dominance of Afrikaans. In accordance with the policy of separate development and its concomitant introduction of the homelands on Namibian territory, education became a major pillar of apartheid politics (Magano Amukugo 1993). The vernacular languages were introduced as the main languages of instruction, whereas Afrikaans and English were only supplementary languages. Bantu education emphasised practical skills and aimed to equip the African population for its subaltern status in the apartheid society. The goal was to prepare them for their work as agricultural labourers, domestic workers, clerical workers, nurses and teachers (Gretschel 1999). Enrolment figures remained low and drop-outs rates were extremely high, with only about 30% of all children continuing after three years of primary education (Magano Amukugo 1993: 66). Far from being regarded as a matter of concern, this fitted the South African policy (ibid.). The main effect of Bantu education on Namibian society was that it systematically planned and succeeded in reinforcing the differences between the white and black society.

With the new times that began after the former liberation movement formed the new government, education was made available to as many as possible, including those adults who as children had never or only briefly had the chance to go to school. Since the new government came to power,

education has been one of its main priorities. In 1999/2000, it invested an impressive 24.4% of its GNP into schooling and non-formal education (Schade 2000).

Namibia's education system comprises seven years of primary and five years of secondary education. Education is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16 or the end of primary school. Since 1990, a new primary and a new secondary school curriculum have been introduced, in an effort to rid the system of its apartheid content. The language policy recommends a mother tongue or a local language as medium of instruction for the first three years of education. Beginning with grade 4, English is phased in to become the sole language of instruction. This policy is based on a model of transfer bilingualism, in which English is given a clear priority as the desired medium of instruction. The early proficiency in the vernacular is regarded as the basis for attainment of proficiency in English (Harlech-Jones 1995).

In 1992, the government set up the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN). Since then the NLPN has been running classes for adults and out-of-school youths all over the country. The programme now covers up to seven years, beginning with two years (Stage 1 and 2) of literacy instruction in local languages. From year 3 onwards, instruction takes place in English. In the fourth year, learners are expected to enter the Adult Upper Primary Education Programme (AUPE), that covers three years, i.e. Stages 4 to 6. Its curriculum is equivalent to the upper grades of formal primary education. At the time of my research, the programme was still in its piloting phase. Among the learning groups I visited several had finished year 3, their first year of instruction in English, but continued to work on the Stage 3 materials for a second year. These classes were called Stage 3b or Stage 4.

5. Researching literacy in Namibia in the years 1999 and 2000

Until today, Namibia remains a land of extreme inequalities. 5% of the population are estimated to earn more than 70% of the national income (Republic of Namibia 1992, quoted in Schade 2000: 111). Despite the government's attempts to further economic growth and create job opportunities for the population, unemployment remains extremely high, nearing 35% according to official calculations of 1998 (Ministry of Labour, quoted in ibid.: 19). This figure includes people who are not actively seeking work, many of whom are women who are resigned to not finding work.

When discussing literacy in Namibia, it is necessary to understand the country's complex social and political environment with its inherited inequalities and divisions. Poverty, lack of opportunity, the difficulties in finding a decent job, housing problems and high living costs were recurring themes in my conversations with informants in Windhoek and elsewhere in the country. Frequently, my informants referred to the hardships of life that persisted in the new Namibia. On the other hand, they acknowledged SWAPO's attempts to mitigate the inherited discrepancies.

As we talked about reading and writing, about texts, books and newspapers, our conversations drifted towards many other issues that were daily concerns to the people with whom I worked. Among these were illness, violence and death. Road accidents were a frequent event in Windhoek and rarely a week passed without my hearing from a learner or a colleague at the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sports about a relative or friend who had been injured or died in a car accident. Namibia has one of the highest HIV infections rates in sub-Saharan African. About 20% of the population are now estimated to be affected. In addition, diseases, such as tuberculosis, are extremely widespread in Katutura. Stories of sickness and death were a frequent event in my informal conversations with learners, while we were sitting on the doorsteps to the classroom, waiting for the other learners to arrive and the lesson to begin.

The above themes and concerns were a fundamental part of what my informants spoke about when we discussed literacy, language and education in contemporary Namibia. It is in this context that I discuss reading and writing in this thesis, as an essential part of everyday life, enmeshed in social relationships, often used in structures of domination that constrain people's lives, but also providing a crucial resource in the struggle for a living and a decent life.

When addressing literacy practices in Namibia, we also need to understand the country's complex linguistic situation. Multilingualism in Namibia is the norm, not the exception. The variety of languages and dialects used in everyday life communication is particularly pronounced in Katutura and in Windhoek whose population includes people from all parts of the country. Among my informants were people whose first language were Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga (both dialects of the Ovambo group), others who spoke Khoekhoe-gowab, Herero or Rukwangali (one of the Kavango dialects). Among the Khoekhoegowab speakers, many were fluent and regular users of Afrikaans which they treated almost as a home language. Code switching (Gumpertz 1982) during conversations was extremely frequent.

When dealing with written texts, the majority of which nowadays are in English, people use the same multilingual strategies. Whoever is present and whichever language most participants speak and understand dominates the conversation that develops around a text. Frequently, people change between languages while they speak. Depending on the linguistic and regional background of those present, the main language of interethnic communication can be either Afrikaans or English, or a mixture of both. Generational differences are another striking feature. Among children and young people, the use of English is nowadays very common. But they do not use it as their exclusive language, but switch and mix constantly between their home language and English.

The above sketched description of the new times in Namibia would be incomplete and lacking a substantial aspect, if it did not take into account those factors and constraints that are located outside the boundaries of the Namibian state. First of all, as mentioned earlier, independence was in part the result of changes at the international level.

Since then, shifts in the global political economy have affected Namibia. With the end of South African rule, the country emerged out of its partial isolation that it had unwillingly shared with its South African occupier. As a result, the country opened up to foreign business. Because the manufacturing sector is particularly underdeveloped and the country is highly dependent on food imports, Namibia remains economically strictly tied to South Africa. Close ties also exist with European countries, in particular Germany.

But the opening up of the country towards the industrialised world has not brought the expected boost to the Namibian economy. Foreign investment, a strong pillar of Namibia's economic hopes, has remained low, despite a favourable political and legal climate (Melber 2000). However, independence has led to a boost in tourism which has made the sector one of the main economic pillars of the country.

Globalisation will be a recurrent theme in this thesis. The connections that link Namibia and its people to the regional and global centres of capitalist and consumerist market production are perhaps most visible in the area of tourism. What particularly interests me is the role of new and increasingly globalised forms of communication and texts whose presence in the country is undeniable. Credit and shop cards are one example, as are tourist signs and tourism brochures, both literacy practices that I will discuss in this thesis.

It is against this changing national and international background that I try to understand literacy and language practices in Namibia, as I examine and describe them in this thesis. As Lanksheer has argued, when the nature and conditions of larger social practices change, necessarily the nature, the meaning and the significance of the particular practices that are associated

with them, do not remain unchanged (Lanksheer 1997: 128). This thesis will demonstrate many such examples of changing literacies in changing times.

PART I: THEORY AND METHODS

1. FROM HAMBURG TO WINDHOEK VIA LONDON: FINDING A RESEARCH TOPIC

1. Introduction: two vignettes

Scenes from a literacy class for cleaners at the State Hospital, Katutura, Windhoek (excerpts from my fieldnotes, 24.6.1999):

The class in the hospital meets during the cleaners' lunch break. Following an agreement between DABE[1] *and the hospital, the management has granted the cleaning ladies an additional lunch hour, so that they can attend the classes. The group meets in the hospital's chapel, a huge, dark and cold room. Learners sit on the church benches. The class consists of two groups of learners, a Stage 3 and a Stage 4 group. There are three learners in the Stage 3 group and two in the other. All are middle-aged or elderly women wearing the rose coloured dresses of the hospital cleaners. Because this is a multi-stage class, the promoter*[2]*, a young woman, who recently finished school, has to divide herself between the two groups.*

The following is a scene from the above lesson. The promoter had first worked with the Stage 3 group and then joined the Stage 4 learners:

The teacher, Anna, introduces today's lesson: 'Now we do lesson 3' (of 'Basic Agriculture', one of the textbooks designed for stage 3 and 4 of the

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[1] Directorate of Adult Basic Education, the central office of the NLPN in Windhoek.

[2] In the NLPN teachers are called promoters. However, the term, which is used in official documents and training handbooks, was rarely used by learners. All the learners I met usually called their promoter 'teacher'.

NLPN). She reads the title of the lesson: 'The importance of agriculture. Let's read.' Anna starts reading. Throughout the lesson it will be like this: Anna does all the reading. When she finishes with the first part, she turns to the picture below the text. She explains to the class the items shown in the picture and then asks learners to look to the next page where different food items are shown. Again, she explains the words in the text. Sometimes she translates into their mother tongue. Then, Anna asks the class a question: 'Do you know the plants and animals from where your clothes come from?' (She has taken this question from the text of the lesson). One of the ladies replies: 'Cotton gives wool.' The teacher continues reading. Whenever she comes across a question in the text, she addresses it to the learners. 'Can you think of the things which come from the farm to make a house?' One learner, trying to answer, starts reading a sentence from the text. The lesson continues in the same way as before. In the textbooks, pieces of texts are interspersed with exercises for the learners to do, but Anna explains that they will first go through the whole lesson. The learners will do the exercises later on their own, when Anna will work with the other group. At the end of the lesson, she comes back to them to mark each learner's exercise.

After the lesson, I spoke to Anna. She had only started working as a literacy promoter three months earlier. When I asked her about her teaching, she explained that she 'just tries' and uses her own experience from school (when she was a student herself). She compared what she did with the Stage 4 group with grade 6 or 7 in school, the stage 3 learners with grade 2 or 3.

The following are excerpts from an interview transcript. My interview partner was Sofia, a cleaner at the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sports[3]. I asked Sofia about her house. It is located in Hakahana, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Katutura, the former black township of Windhoek.

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[3] Interview with Sofia, Windhoek, 20.7.2000, interview conducted partly in English, partly in Oshindonga.

U: Is it your home or do you rent it?

S: It's my house.

U: Do you still have to pay for it?

S: I pay every month.

U: How much do you pay?

S: The house, I pay N$403.

U: And that is for what? (Eumbo loovene?)

S: Is for the house.

U: Is it like a loan you pay back? To whom do you pay it?

S: (Oko NHE, National Housing Enterprise[4]. Ohandi nanwa ko salali.) They deduct it from the salary.

U: And for how long do you have to pay that money? (Ouna okufuta efimbo lifike pani?)

S: 20 years.

U: Do you have to pay for the ground? The place where the house stands? (Ouna okufuta evi nenge ehala mpoka puna egumbo lyoye?)

S: (Kandi shiwo ihe mboka, shashi onda deposita owala egubo ngeya gali omashona moHakahana gondunda imwe etandi pewa oloona ontiyali, paife kandi shiwo ihe ngele evi olya kwatewamo nenge ongiini.) I do not know, because I deposit only the small house with one bedroom in Ohakahana and from there I got a second loan, now I don't know if the ground is also included or how.

U: When did you buy the house?

S: In 1994.

U: Do you have any papers in which they explain?

S: Yes.

U: They don't say in the housing paper if the ground is included?.

S: (Iha ye shuulike kutya mombapila kutya evi ina likwatelwa mo nenge ongiini.) They never show if it is also included.

U: Are these papers written in English?

S: Yes, they are.

Later in the interview, Sofia told me more about her financial situation. She explained how much was deducted every month from her salary, for the loan from NHE and for her insurance policies. This was stated on her pay-slip. Then we talked about banks.

U: What do you do when you want to have money from your account?

S: I collect money from my account to buy groceries, like bread and meat.

U: So, you go to the bank. Is there a form, a paper to write?

S: No, I use the Autobank card which I put in the automatic machine and withdraw straight.

U: When you do that what is said on the screen, is that in English or in Afrikaans?

S: In both languages, but I like to use Afrikaans part, because I understand Afrikaans better.

2. Many questions

I have included the above vignettes in order to illustrate a number of questions to which I was drawn repeatedly during my fieldwork. While in

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[4] The National Housing Enterprise provides loans to individuals who want to build their own house. For more information on these housing schemes see Seckelmann (1997).

Namibia, the same questions were raised again and again, during my classrooms visits, my discussions with learners and staff of the NLPN, my observations of literacy practices in daily life and when I analysed policy documents and textbooks. Back in the UK, confronted with the task of writing, the same issues emerged as strong themes underlying many of my reflections. In short, these questions were at the heart of what my research and this thesis are about.

The questions I am talking about revolve around different issues that have to do with literacy in the NLPN and reading and writing in everyday life and work. Researching reading and writing 'inside' and 'outside' the NLPN, I observed a huge disparity between the kind of literacy learners acquired in the NLPN and the way they used literacy in everyday life and at work. The forms of literacy and the kind of knowledge introduced in the classes appeared to be fairly constrained and this contradicted the great diversity of literacy uses I observed in daily life (cf. Prinsloo and Breier 1996). These were strong impressions I gained during my fieldwork. In many ways, my efforts at analysing and theorising the data, during and after the end of my fieldwork in Namibia, were geared towards understanding these apparent gaps. To put it more bluntly, I had to ask whether what I perceived as disparity was as 'real' for the people with whom I did this research as it seemed to me. Did learners and teachers see similar gaps, or, did they rather think in terms of continuity and exchange? How did participants themselves construct the relationship between literacy and education in everyday life and work and the classes they attended?

Similar questions emerged from my work on literacy and tourism (see Chapters 7, 8 and 9). Again, I encountered a variety of specific and often complex literacy practices that were part of the social practices involved in dealing with and working for tourists. Most of these differed hugely from the kind of literacy introduced in the NLPN.

A related issue, that I frequently discussed in my fieldnotes, concerns the 'functionality' of learning in the NLPN. It presents itself as a programme that is

functional in the sense that it provides learning which is of use in various areas of everyday life, for example health, agriculture, small businesses and civics (The National Literacy Programme in Namibia, no date; DABE 1994a). Furthermore, the NLPN makes the claim that what learners acquire is relevant in terms of economic and work opportunities (DABE 1997). While I do agree that a lot of what the programme offers can be useful in terms of solving everyday life issues and may improve their chances of earning a satisfactory income, my own observations and my interviews with learners revealed a much more complex picture. A range of factors, both educational and non-educational, enhance or hamper the chances for learners to make significant changes in their lives. This view is supported by many other studies whose insights contradict the idea of easy application and automatic improvement. Puchner (1999) for example has shown that in rural Mali the opportunities women had to profit from their newly gained literacy skills depended heavily on their position inside the family and the possibilities open to them in the rural economy.

Two contradictory perspectives appear to be represented in the NLPN. In policy documents, training workshops and teacher handbooks, the NLPN presents itself as a participatory programme that adopts a learner-centred and adult-focused teaching philosophy (see for example DABE 1994b; DABE 1995; DABE 1997). But the reality of classroom interaction, as I observed it, was quite different. Learning was strongly textbook-oriented, teacher-guided and focused on the unilateral transfer of knowledge rather than exchange, sharing or critical reflection. In short, the central dilemma appears to be between a participatory and a directive style of teaching in the NLPN[5].

The question that interested me most in my research was how participants themselves perceived the NLPN. Did they see it as a 'school' for adults and

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[5] This issue was repeatedly addressed in evaluation reports (Brown et al. 1998 and 1999) and during staff meetings. It was of particular concern for DABE's training division (Anna Nujoma, Head of Training Division DABE, personal communication, 6.6.1999).

youths (as many participants called it), offering a second chance to those who had not had much formal education? Or, did they believe it to be a kind of community education programme that offers practical life skills and helps with everyday life uses of literacy? Because this is related to the role the NLPN takes on within individual learners' motivations and their own theories of literacy, there cannot be any single answer to this question.

In this research, I make the claim that in order to understand the above issues regarding literacy in the NLPN and reading and writing in daily life, it is necessary to adopt a broad perspective that goes beyond educational aspects and examines the social and cultural representations, the discourses as well as the institutional practices within which both literacy use in everyday life and literacy education in the NLPN are embedded. In doing so, I attempt to elicit the cultural assumptions and the specific social and economic conditions that underpin the above models. Accordingly, my study is grounded in a social concept of literacy and examines the 'social uses of literacy' (Prinsloo and Breier 1996). With regards to the learners and users of literacy, who are at the centre of my research, this implies the need to study local discourses of literacy and education and the personal agendas that brought individuals to the literacy classes. A central question is how people use, define and value literacy in different contexts of everyday life and how they assess their own learning needs.

In order to better understand the dynamics between everyday life and classroom literacies, it is necessary to closely analyse the characteristics of both literacies 'inside' and 'outside'. This required that I take a much closer look at the social and institutional practices people were involved in on a daily basis. In other words, I had to extend my research far beyond literacy in the strict sense in order to acquaint myself with the changing social and institutional environment of post-independence Namibia and the emerging forms of literacy and communication that were part of it. My questions required that I gain an understanding of how adults in Namibia 'take hold' or 'seize hold' (Kulick and Stroud 1993: 55) of new literacies, in everyday life, at

work and in the NLPN. The social concept of literacy that I use in this research and that I will present in the following chapter, adopts such a broad perspective.

3. Literacies in and beyond the classroom

My interest in the above problematic developed during my fieldwork and as part of a process of critical, self-reflection on my work. The disparities between literacies inside and outside is at the heart of what I noticed again and again during my fieldwork. However, I was aware that my perceptions might have been misleading and that what looked liked a gap could also have been similarity and continuity. When I began to analyse my data, I realised that it was necessary to question the idea of disparity and to move towards a more diversified picture that could include similarities and mutual influences. This became particularly important with respect to the concept of 'schooled literacy' (Cook-Gumpertz 1986; Street and Street 1991) that I used to describe much of what I saw in the classrooms (see Chapter 10).

The contradiction between directive and participatory teaching is an observation I frequently made in my classroom visits and which I found to be directly connected with the issue of inside/outside dynamics. Both observations were the source of many of my own ambiguous reactions towards the NLPN. I discussed these repeatedly in my notes and my diary. I was also very aware of the need to reflect on the discursive and disciplinary origins that shaped my own perceptions. Whenever I started to analyse my observations and feelings more systematically, I faced the same dilemma: I was sceptical about the content of the materials and the way teaching/learning was going on. Despite my attempts on an 'analytical relativism' (Street 1996b), my interpretations were strongly influenced by my own western academic views of literacy, my disenchantment with the grand narratives of development and modernisation and my knowledge of what I regard to be the failures of many literacy programmes in the so-called developing world. As is common for such initiatives, the NLPN makes huge

claims regarding the impact of literacy on people's lives. My own doubts made me question such claims. From there, I entered a rather anxious process of questioning my role as ethnographer and the dilemmas inherent in my subjectivity.

However, my views began to change, when I learned more about how literacy is valued in local discourses in Namibia and how, in its various forms, it is integrated with social and economic practices. Furthermore, from the early stages of my fieldwork, I was intrigued by the apparent success of the 'traditional' curriculum-based model in the NLPN which seemed to meet many participants' expectations. I observed the same learners again and again in the classes, highly motivated, studying their textbooks, preparing themselves for the tests and waiting anxiously for the teacher to mark their exercises. These positive impressions were reinforced by my discussions with learners who spoke about their satisfaction with the programme and the progress they had made.

The decision to make both reading and writing 'inside' and 'outside' the subject of my research emerged as a result of my preoccupation with all of the above issues. To sum up, three questions were at the centre of my concerns. First, how did I arrive at my highly ambiguous feelings towards what I observed? Second, how could I better understand the dynamics between inside and outside literacies, from the point of view of learners? And, finally, what kind of insights regarding the policy and practice of literacy education in Namibia might be gained from this study? Beneath these questions, not only lies a 'typical' anthropologist's concern with the 'emic' view, but also a deeper preoccupation that is central to both my intellectual concerns as a researcher as well as my identity as an 'engaged practitioner' (Barnett 1997). How can I move away from mere 'analytic commentary' and 'ideology critique' (Wickert 1998: 7) that easily dismisses policies or practices as inadequate to a better understanding of the social processes that characterise the use of literacy, both inside the NLPN as well as outside, in everyday life? Such commentary, as I will show in the next section, is part of

my own intellectual and professional history and developed from my work experience. Having moved on to the PhD, one of my primary concerns, however, was to review the grounds on which my contestations were built.

The following section intends to serve two purposes. First, I will attempt to contextualise this research by relating it to my own professional background and my previous work in the field of literacy. Second, I will reflect on the 'why' of the topic chosen and on how, over the course of my work in Namibia and in London, the research questions developed and changed. By doing so, I will begin to tell the 'story' of my research, i.e. I will introduce the narrative of the research process.

In the chapter that follows this brief reflexive account, I introduce the main theoretical concepts I employ in order to address the questions that I raise in my study, and relate these to the choice of methodology.

4. From Hamburg to Windhoek via London: trajectories of change, choice and doubt

The choice of the topic for this PhD is the result of a process that unfolded over several months. What began with the first decision for a topic was a trajectory of change, choice and doubt. Other decisions followed the first choice, as a result of which my research at different times took on new directions. At the centre of my destinations and pathways, several of which turned out to be dead ends, were my own debates about the focus and perspective of my research. The reason I expose these errands here is that the choices I made over the time are the bedrock for the theoretical clarifications which will be the core of the following chapter.

Three sets of factors had a decisive influence on my choice of subject matter. First, my academic and professional career, second my encounter with the 'field' and third, my attempts to make sense out of the data I had collected.

Having trained as a social anthropologist, I became interested in literacy and literacy policy when I began to work for one of UNESCO's research and training institutes. As an influential international organisation, UNESCO has developed and actively promotes its own education discourses. This was the time of my first initiation into a powerful literacy discourse and my subsequent gradual disenchantment with this narrative. Since then, I have been much more involved in academic research and debate at the level of literacy theory. With the New Literacy Studies and the social theories of literacy, within which I locate my own work, a new discourse opened itself to me, which I gratefully embraced, as it seemed to offer a way to address many of my earlier doubts.

However, throughout the process of developing and conducting my research, I realised that there was no such thing as an easy and continuous identification with one discourse. Much to the contrary, I soon began to understand my 'multiple subjectivity'. The 'old' policy discourses had not disappeared but popped up unexpectedly at various stages in my work, sometimes without me being aware of them. At the same time, I acquainted myself more and more with poststructuralist and postmodernist discourses that had previously been unfamiliar to me. The more I learned to be reflexive and to question my assumptions and interpretations, the better I understood the hybrid nature of my own stance.

My initiation into the social theories of literacy strongly reinforced my doubts regarding the realist and modernist paradigms from which I came. Thus, when I embarked on my new research, I believed I knew what my position was. However, once I arrived in Namibia, the situation soon became more difficult. Following a gradual process of involvement and identification with the practical day-to-day problems the NLPN faced, which I often discussed with its staff, I began to question my previous assumptions. Throughout my stay in Namibia, I took on various roles, i.e. as informal adviser or as teacher. These roles strongly influenced my thoughts on the programme and on my own work. When I took on a few small tasks in the materials development division, an even closer involvement with the practice

began. On the other side, my gradually improving contacts with learners opened up new perspectives on the programme. Finally, my research in the area of tourism literacies brought in a whole set of other ideas about literacy as a social and economic practice (see Chapters 7, 8 and 9).

Proximity and distance (Powdermaker 1966; Agar 1999), central issues for any anthropological fieldwork, were at the heart of many of my reflections. This did not necessarily change once geographic distance between me and the programme had been re-established with my return to London. Oscillating between positions of closeness and distance influenced how I began to work with my data. At the same time, while I read and re-read my data, I became more aware of how I had been positioned in the field by different research subjects and interview partners. Through this form of reflexivity, that attempts to move beyond the limits of 'self-reflexivity' (cf. Wolf 1996, Lal 1996), I began to understand better how these processes of positioning worked in the micro-contexts of interviews and observations to produce situated knowledge (Lal 1996).

My changing subjectivities and the various positions I was assigned caused me to shift between different discourses and often made it difficult for me to remain attentive enough to be aware of my altering positions and attitudes. These difficulties were in part a result of the disrupted history of my own discursive identity. Writing this PhD, in many ways, is an attempt to make sense of the changing discourses that occupied the personal, political and academic contexts of my own experience. In that sense, I experience my research as similar to what Ball describes as 'a sociology of complexity, uncertainty and doubt' rather than 'a hard-edged, essentially male, logocentric sociology of parsimony, certainty and closure' (Ball 1994: 180).

My changing positions resulted in various reformulations of my research topic and at different times made me embark on different directions. Two options occupied my thoughts. These options are at the heart of the theoretical choices which I will explicate in the next chapter. At the same time, they are of course inextricably linked to the question of the overall purpose of

my research. In that sense, my choices exemplify the importance of reflexivity, in order to understand how the researcher's responses to the 'field' are part and parcel of the process of knowledge creation in research (Knight 1997).

The initial choice I made focused my research on the ethnography of literacy and language practices in the NLPN and in everyday life. Early in the research, the idea to work on tourism was added. Tourism had been mentioned by learners in the first evaluation of the NLPN (Lind 1996). As the previous pages have already revealed, the above is the option I finally settled on. The core idea was to include what I had tentatively termed 'public', bureaucratic and tourism literacies and to compare these 'outside' literacies with the 'inside' literacies of the NLPN.

The other possibility, that at times seemed to have taken over my work, was a post-modern discourse-centred analysis of the policy process. With this option, the focus of the research would have been on the level of policy and planning in the NLPN instead of centring on an ethnography of teaching and learning. Although I had set off with the very first idea, during the first part of my fieldwork I began to focus much more on the latter[6]. In part, these changes resulted from my assessment of what the field seemed to offer. As I will explain in more detail later in this thesis, my attempts to research literacy in everyday life and in tourism were hampered by difficulties and unexpected constraints. On the other hand, my good contacts with several members of the NLPN's central office opened up the possibility of gaining insights into the policy process. Since I developed good relationships with the staff of the materials development division, it would have been possible to learn more about this part of the NLPN's work. Furthermore, work in the Namibian archives revealed interesting material about the history of literacy policy in Namibia.

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[6] A timetable of my research activities is provided in the annex.

Many other factors influenced my choice and the difficulties I had in deciding. Not all of these need to be explained here. My worries about my ability to research literacy in everyday life contexts contributed to my turn towards the policies and the 'top' level of the programme. However, over the course of my two stays in Namibia, both the possibilities and the constraints of my position became much clearer. The good rapport with a small group of learners and teachers, which developed during my first stay in Namibia, did much to influence my final choice. Interviews and conversations with learners, although limited by language difficulties, helped me to discover many of the literacy practices learners deal with in everyday life and drew my attention to the importance of English in public, bureaucratic and commercial domains. This was important data which triggered the decision to move towards a focus on the learners and the literacy practices inside and outside of the classrooms.

In the end, the choice is of course not a complete either/or decision. Foregrounding the inside/outside dynamics and the participants' discourses does not mean that the policy models no longer play a role in this research. They remain an integral part of my investigation in so far as I ask what influence they have on learners' views and how they impact on what is going on in the classrooms. In that sense, my research combines an ethnography of literacy practices in- and outside the NLPN with a policy analysis of the programme.

2. RESEARCHING LITERACY: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical concepts that guided my research on literacy in Namibia. The two main theoretical fields in which this research is grounded are social theories of literacy and concepts of discourse developed in sociology/philosophy, social anthropology and development studies. The main argument I will put forward is that literacy needs to be understood both as a social practice and as a discourse. Accordingly, the approach I develop is based on a combination of literacy and discourse theories. Methodologically, it combines ethnography with discourse analysis.

I begin the chapter by developing my own understanding of the concept of discourse based on Michel Foucault's work. At the same time, I discuss the relevance of his ideas for my research on literacy in Namibia. I then introduce my concept of literacy as a social and discursive practice and locate my own work in relation to previous research in the New Literacy Studies. My chief interest in these sections is to explain how in my thesis I combine discourse concepts with social theories of literacy. The approach I use is particularly indebted to Catherine Kell's discussion of discourses in relation to literacy and to the research she and others have carried out in South Africa (see Prinsloo and Breier 1996).

The chapter ends with a discussion of some methodological issues concerning ethnography that are relevant for my research. In particular, I address postmodern critiques of ethnography and social anthropology. In Chapter 3, I focus on the more down-to-earth issues that regard the research methods I used.

2. What is a discourse?

How does Foucault define discourse? According to Foucault, discourses do not only refer to language, but to 'language-in-(social inter-)action' (Burman et al. 1997: 8), to the constructing of meaning and to the way knowledge operates in relation to power and authority. In that sense, discourses denote the social use of language (and of other modes of communication).

With the above, Foucault firmly places language, manifested in discourse, in its context of use. In his archaeological works, he explains how discourses constitute and shape society. These processes encompass several dimensions, i.e. the construction of objects of knowledge, their relation to the subject and the way discourses operate in and through social relationships (Foucault 1972). More concretely, these three dimensions involve the following processes. First, how through language we construct and re-construct objects or 'entities' of knowledge and how we surround them with concepts, beliefs and rules. Second, how our identities are being socially constructed, i.e. how we experience ourselves in terms of discursive categories and are governed by our social selves. The third dimension relates to how discourses are produced and re-produced in the life of interconnected groups of people, institutions, structures and social practices. It follows from the above that discourses not only condition their objects but also those who pronounce them, they are 'about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority' (Ball 1990: 21).

Foucault first developed his theory of discourse in his earlier works on the development of the human sciences. His intent was to show how knowledge was formed through historically situated social processes. As part of these processes, he suggests, knowledge systems, or sets of 'discursive formations' (Foucault 1972) evolved and developed into academic disciplines. Discourses thus can be described as 'different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice' (Fairclough 1992a: 3). Such discourses, for example the discourse of western medical science, are realised in particular

ways of using language and visual images. They are manifested in particular social techniques and practices (e.g. certain medical technologies) and through the way institutional space is ordered. It is in this sense that I take up the notion of discourse in my research to address literacy which I see as always located within such broader discursive formations.

How then do I employ Foucault's ideas in my work? As I explained in the previous chapter, I take the view that the kind of questions I raise in this research can best be approached by looking at the social representations and the cultural models of literacy through which reading and writing are formed and enacted. These representations are shaped by socially constructed ways of seeing the world, i.e. they are grounded in discourses. Such discourses are interrelated with practice, thus 'affecting the design and implementation' of projects, programmes and activities (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 73).

3. A new understanding of literacy: reading and writing as a social and discursive practice

Discourses or regimes of social representations are central to a social theory of literacy (Street 1984, 1993a, 1995; Barton 1994; Barton and Hamilton 1998; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000). In this perspective, literacy is not conceived as a single set of competencies, but as different practices 'embedded in political relations, ideological practices and symbolic meaning structures' (Rockhill 1993: 162), and, I would add, discourses. It follows from the above that literacy cannot be defined in terms of technical skills alone, but that a variety of conventions or modes of using written language exists.

Reading and writing are social as well as 'situated' practices (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000). In this view, reading and writing are seen as always being located in specific contexts and situations. What counts as literacy and for what purposes it is being used, varies depending on the people involved and the social and political context within which reading and writing take place.

The notion of literacy as a social and situated activity explicitly builds on the assumption that how we use and value reading and writing depends on both literacy-related as well as broader social and cultural meanings, values and representations (Street 1995; Barton 1994a; Barton and Hamilton 1998). Street has called this the 'ideological' model of literacy (Street 1984, 1993a, 1995). If we accept this definition, discourses are part of a social understanding of literacy. For the purpose of my research, I therefore define literacy as a social and discursive practice[1]. Foucault's concept of discourse provides a powerful tool to study the role of discourses in shaping how literacy is used and valued (cf. Kell 1994, 1996). In this thesis, I discuss different literacy practices as they are embedded in and shaped by a range of societal discourses, such as school discourses, commercial discourses, bureaucratic discourses and tourism discourses. At the same time, I try to uncover ordinary people's understandings of these discourses and their own theories of literacy. Following Habermas (1988) I call these local or lifeworld discourses.

Gee defines the relationship between literacy and discourse in a more straightforward manner. For him, literacy means 'the mastery of a Secondary Discourse' (Gee 1996: 143). In order to understand Gee's proposition, one has to look at his definition of discourse (Gee 1999). Gee's Discourse – which he spells with a capital D in order to distinguish it from the usage of the term in linguistics – is a more expanded concept. It includes ways of using language, identities, values, beliefs, acts and interaction (see ibid.: 38). Furthermore, Gee makes a distinction between primary Discourses, of the family and the home (what I call lifeworld discourses), and secondary Discourses which are tied up with institutions, such as schools and broader structures (Gee 1996; cf. Habermas 1988).

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[1] The notion of literacy as a social and discursive practice is adapted from Cushla Kaptizke's (1995) study of literacy and religion in Seventh-Day Adventism. Kapitzke speaks about literacy and religion as social and discursive practices.

The assumption that literacies are inextricably linked with discourses and require the reader and writer to know something about the discourses they engage with when reading or writing a particular text, is strongly supported by my own data. In this thesis, I discuss numerous examples of literacy practices that are embedded in such discourses. I also show that those who use literacy need to know the rules and conventions of the situation, they have to 'say' (or write) and 'do' the 'right' things (Gee 1996: 124). As a theoretical construct, the notion of literacy as a social and discursive practice is precisely concerned with these culturally determined and contested rules and conventions of reading and writing. This contrasts with a skills-based notion of literacy that disregards these factors.

However, I am not sure whether literacy (or the ability to use reading and writing in diverse social contexts) always requires 'mastery' of the involved discourses. In Chapters 5 and 6, I describe how my informants engaged with various bureaucratic and commercial literacy practices and their associated discourses without necessarily being fully aware and knowledgeable of the positions and rules these involve. Furthermore, Gee's distinction between primary and secondary Discourses is problematic, because in 'real' life discourses do not appear in such distinctive units (cf. Kell 1994). This is particularly true in modern social contexts, for example in the urban areas of Windhoek where many discourses meet and interact. Furthermore, I believe that literacy cannot be defined as limited to secondary Discourses alone, because family and home discourses are not necessarily oral.

With respect to literacy teaching, the social theory of literacy suggests that what is taught is always a specific type of reading and writing (Kell 1996; Luke 1997). These literacy practices are part of broader educational aims and therefore are shaped by the norms, values and practices of the educational programme. Furthermore, part of what is transmitted are certain beliefs and values about literacy and language itself (Barton 1994b). The NLPN explicitly declares educational aims beyond reading, writing and numeracy. The programme claims to have a strong focus on building democracy and

citizenship and aims at contributing to social and economic development (DABE 1997). The teaching of reading and writing in the NLPN is framed by these discourses (see Chapter 10).

Literacy practices are not only located within and shaped by discourses, they are also a powerful means to establish, to disseminate, to maintain, to refute and to change discourses. It is in this sense that I understand literacy itself to be a discursive practice. Reading and writing are social tools to spread worldviews, values, norms, forms of behaviour, etc. As a discursive practice, literacy contributes to the creation and promotion of social identities. This is not limited to educational contexts. Social activities such as shopping, or institutional sites, such as the workplace, to name but some of the contexts I studied in this research, are places of important social discourses (Prinsloo and Breier 1996). In these contexts, literacy is encapsulated in broader social processes that promote and disseminate new social identities (cf. Gee, Hull and Lanksheer 1996).

Three further theoretical considerations are important for the approach I have chosen in this research. First, by opting for a social and discursive concept of literacy, I do not exclude the 'technical', i.e. the skills aspect of reading and writing (Street 1993a). In the actual context of use, the coding and decoding of letters are part and parcel of 'understanding' and using literacy. For the people who use reading and writing in 'real' situations, skills and discourses are not separate. If in this thesis, I try to separate the social and discursive from the technical and foreground the former, I do so for analytical purposes. My intention is to develop a methodology that allows me to better understand the social and the ideological in literacy and the role the technical plays within that.

The second point to make relates to the relationship between written and oral language. As many others have rightly argued (see for example Street 1993a), in its actual context of use, literacy is integrated with oral speech. This emerged strongly from my observations of reading and writing that I will describe in this thesis. The specific oral/literate mix, i.e. the relation between

literacy and orality in each context, is a crucial parameter to understand the 'social uses' (Prinsloo and Breier 1996) of reading and writing. In that sense, literacy practices are always embedded in broader communicative practices (cf. Grillo 1989).

Because in the contemporary world, many texts include pictures, graphics, tables, touch and other semiotic devices (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996), some researchers now speak of 'multiliteracies', referring to the increasing range of communication channels used in everyday life (The New London Group 1996). Although I agree with the claim that in modern life texts have become increasingly multimodal and could see this happening in Namibia as well, I have decided to continue using the term literacy practices. I do so in order to foreground letters and words, because I believe that despite the increasingly complex nature of communication, in many situations the written text itself is still a crucial part of what people struggle with. However, it is important to be aware that the ways of understanding and using texts have changed because of their increasingly multimodal nature.

The third and final issue relates to my encounter with numeracy in this research. As will become evident in the course of this thesis, I observed numeracy not so much as a separate activity, but as being used alongside literacy. Many social literacy practices that I will discuss in this thesis, rely on both reading and writing and arithmetic. Invoices are a good example of such combined literacy/numeracy practices. The integration of literacy and numeracy evidently requires a theoretical framework that conceptualises numbers and additions in the same way as letters and grammar, i.e. as a social and cultural activity. I use Baker's and Street's (1996) concept of numeracy as a social practice, i.e. 'behaviour and conceptualisations related to the use of arithmetic in everyday life' (Breier and Prinsloo 1996: 24).

4. Literacy as discourse

Complementary to analysing literacy as social and discursive practice, in this research, I study literacy itself as a discourse[2]. Conceptually, this moves the analysis away from specific uses of reading and writing onto a broader level of theorising literacy. At this level, I understand literacy as a historically, socially and politically constructed field of knowledge and practice that consists of a range of discourses embedded in social, academic and institutional relationships. Studying literacy as discourse, or as 'a regime of representation' (Escobar 1995: 6), allows to uncover and explicate the concepts and assumptions which underpin literacy use and literacy teaching in Namibia.

This approach is fundamentally different from an educationalist's perspective or a conventional policy analysis that would take structures and policies as given and then ask for their effectiveness or impact. By contrast, I do not take policies or learners' perceptions for granted, i.e. I refute any pre-conceived notion of policy as merely being the result of a process of rational thinking and scientific debate that is based on an objective and impartial understanding and modelling of 'real' social issues. Accordingly, I try in this thesis to deconstruct 'preconstructed' notions of literacy that inform policy, public discourse and local thinking about literacy and illiteracy (Kell 1994; Prinsloo and Breier 1996). By doing so, I attempt to unravel the connections between literacy discourses and other discourses that are at the core of current policy debate and politics in Namibia, namely discourses of development and discourses of reconciliation.

At the policy level, literacy discourses encompass a range of discourses, several of which have influenced literacy teaching in Namibia. In international policy making, the 'literacy discourse' (which in itself is an array of different

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[2] In order to do so, I draw on recent works by social anthropologists who study development as a discourse (see for example Escobar 1995; Crush 1995; Gardner and Lewis 1996).

discourses) emerged in the 1950, in the same period when the nowadays common notions of development and underdevelopment were created (cf. Escobar 1995). Literacy, or rather the lack thereof, was identified as a global concern and a correlate of poverty and underdevelopment. Since the emergence of literacy as a discourse and a field of intervention receiving widespread international attention, changing definitions of literacy have produced various types of literacy programmes all over the world (cf. Jones 1984, 1990; Oxenham 1980; Verhoeven 1994).

In Namibia, the concept of functional literacy has played a major role in developing literacy policy, although other discourses, namely Freirean inspired discourses of critical literacy, have influenced literacy education prior to independence. Before 1990, literacy was shaped by anti-colonial and anti-apartheid discourses and was closely linked to the liberation struggle.

Functional literacy (UNESCO 1973; Bhola 1994) was introduced by UNESCO in the 1960s. Initially, the term was used to refer to the needs of employment and economic development. The concept was later enlarged to include the literacy demands of civic and personal communication (Verhoeven 1994). Functional literacy relates education to human resource development and the promotion of social and economic development, although foregrounding the latter (Oxenham 1980).

In the NLPN, the idea of literacy as being 'functional' in terms of the social and economic needs of communities and the society, is widely accepted. In this discourse, literacy is presented as apolitical and is subsumed under the new development and reconciliation discourses that emerged after independence (cf. Tegborg 1996 and Chapter 10).

In the NLPN, discourses appear in various forms and at various levels. The programme is first the object of various discourses, e.g. of education and development discourses. These discourses are located at the level of policy. But as they are articulated through the curriculum, the textbooks and through suggested teaching practices, they permeate through all levels of the programme. Accordingly, conjunctions between literacy practices and

discourses can be found at different levels of the NLPN, for example in the learning materials. As they articulate social meanings of literacy and knowledge, these discourses give value to specific literacy practices (see Chapter 10).

5. Academic discourses of literacy: the New Literacy Studies

Any discussion of literacy as a discourse would be incomplete if it did not take into account academic discourses. In chapter 1, I described how my own positioning within different academic and policy discourses has influenced my stance in this research. These orientations are at the heart of how in this study I attempt to understand literacy issues in Namibia.

Beginning in the 1980s, the New Literacy Studies (NLS) and the social theory of literacy emerged as a counter discourse to mainstream educational models of literacy research and practice. The NLS have convincingly pointed out the limitations of technical conceptions of literacy and revealed the embeddedness of all language and literacy practices in social relations of power and authority and the discourses these produce. Until now, the NLS has above all been developed as a research model (Carmen 1998) providing an alternative to the conventional quantitative and skills-based approach to literacy research. A range of studies from different disciplines have been produced (see for example Barton and Ivanic 1991; Besnier 1995; Heath 1983; Gee 1996; Street 1993b; Barton and Hamilton 1998; Kalman 1998; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000; Street 2001a).

The main interest in the NLS so far has been in community or non-institutional literacies. A good example is the 'Social Uses of Literacy' (SoUL) Project in South Africa (Prinsloo and Breier 1996). The SoUL project has successfully demonstrated the diversity and richness of the literacies of people who are generally labelled as 'illiterate'. But relatively few studies exist which use a social literacies perspective to research an adult literacy programme (see for example Yates 1994; Street 2001b). In my research, I

combined both, employing the same theoretical framework to study literacy 'inside' the NLPN and 'outside', in everyday life.

Recent studies in the NLS have coined a number of new terms to address the multiplicity and context-bounded nature of literacy practices. Examples are concepts such as local literacies (Barton and Hamilton 1998), situated literacies (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000), work-place literacies (O'Connor 1993; Levett and Lanksheer 1994; Gibson 1996; Watters 1996; Breier 1997; Lanksheer 1997), city literacies (Gregory and Williams 2000) and many others. Another term frequently used is 'schooled literacy' (Cook-Gumpertz 1986) or the 'schooling of literacy' (Street and Street 1991). Several of these terms will be used in this thesis.

With respect to my own research in Namibia, the NLS raises several issues. First, I use the NLS model to study institutionalised forms of literacy, such as bureaucratic or commercial literacies, something that has not been done extensively by other NLS researchers. Second, although the New Literacy Studies have provided important insights into the 'situated' (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic 2000) and the 'social' (Street 1995; Prinsloo and Breier 1996) nature of literacy, only few studies have systematically explored the role of discourses in relation to literacy practices (see for example Malan 1996). In her study of literacy practices in an informal settlement in the Cape Peninsula, Kell (1994, 1996) discusses the relationship between literacy practices and discourses in different contexts, such as the Night School and local development structures. In my research, I am interested in similar questions regarding the role of discourses for literacy teaching and literacy use in institutional, commercial and work-related contexts. The main issue I explore is the extent to which learners, who engage in new literacy practices, at the same time have to acquaint themselves and even to identify with the underpinning discourses as well as the norms of behaviour that are common to the specific situation. In doing so, I explore relationships between discourses and social identities.

The concept of literacy as social practice has significant consequences for the way literacy teaching is organised. At present, researchers and practitioners have started to look at the ideological model as a basis for developing new intervention strategies. Yet, the practical implications deriving from the ideological model need much further attention. Previous studies in the NLS have however indicated the importance of understanding everyday life literacy practices. Their authors have come to the conclusion that literacy programmes need to identify and capitalise on the literacy practices learners are engaged in outside the classes (Rogers 1992; Yates 1994; Prinsloo and Breier 1996; Rogers et al. 1999; Street 2001a and b). A similar view has prompted my interest in everyday life, institutional and work-related literacy practices.

The possible implications of the NLS for teaching in schools have been discussed by a small number of researchers close to the NLS (see for example Villagas 1991; Heath and Mangiola 1991). In my research, I am particularly interested in the use of what Rogers has termed 'real' literacy materials (Rogers 1994 and 1999; Rogers et al. 1999) for adult literacy and education programmes. In my chapters on public and bureaucratic literacy practices (see Chapters 5 and 6), I examine 'real' texts, e.g. forms and invoices, commonly used by government offices, and discuss these as examples of complex literacy practices that involve an understanding of literacy, language, discourse and social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996).

6. Literacy, discourse, power and identity

A central finding of my research is that as social activities, reading and writing are always rooted in power relations. This observation calls for an analysis of power and authority in relation to various forms of literacy. Street's 'ideological model' precisely suggests this kind of approach (Street 1993a). In my view, Foucault's notion of discourses as instances of the power/knowledge matrix (Foucault 1980) lends itself ideally to the study of

literacy as an 'ideological' not merely a technical practice. In his genealogical work, Foucault concentrates on the social functions of discourses in relation to practice, i.e. the role these discourses play in the production and articulation of power (Marshall 1990). The power of a discourse is played out in its appearance of neutrality. Discourses that, as we know, are social constructions, become 'true' through reference to an error-free form of knowledge, located outside human relations and their limited perceptions (Foucault 1980). It is because what a discourse says is believed to be true that we easily consent to such positions and identify with them.

Foucault's concept of power invites us to look at different literacies, as they are linked to institutional and interpersonal hierarchies and structures, to forms of knowledge that carry authority and to powerful social identities. The NLPN is such an influential institution that is governed by a range of powerful social discourses. But as I will show in this thesis, the role of discourses in relation to literacy and power is not limited to public institutions such as schools or literacy programmes, but is important in other contexts of social and economic life.

In order to operationalise the relationship between literacy, knowledge and power, I use the term 'dominant literacy(s)' or 'dominant literacy practice' (Street 1995; Prinsloo and Breier 1996; Barton and Hamilton 2000). These concepts indicate that different literacies carry different degrees of capital in Bourdieu's terms (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). The notion of dominant literacies allows me to depart from the idea of reading and writing as being 'neutral' and to draw attention to the way literacies are part and parcel of structures of power and domination (cf. Street 1993a). As the researchers in the SoUL project suggest, it is helpful to distinguish between literacy practices that have more or less symbolic and cultural capital (Prinsloo and Breier 1996).

I employ the term 'local literacies' (Barton and Hamilton 1998) to denote the ways 'ordinary' people use reading and writing and the theories of literacy they held. Such local literacies are different from institutionalised reading and

writing practices. They may include literacy in a different language or dialect (Street 1994). Cammitta (1993: 228-9) defines 'vernacular literacy' as the forms of reading and writing that are

> closely associated with culture which is neither elite nor institutional, which is traditional and indigenous to the diverse cultural processes of communities as distinguished from the uniform, inflexible standards of institutions.

While I would abstain from using the word 'traditional' in this context, as it implies a false idea of the local as being stable and not developing, her concept otherwise covers my own understanding of local literacies. I also refer to people's lifeworld (Habermas 1988) as the conceptual and cultural framework in which local uses of literacy are rooted. Vernacular literacies then are connected with local or vernacular forms of culture and with local identities that emerge from and are part and parcel of people's lifeworld.

The main question I ask in this thesis is how ordinary people, using their local literacy practices, access and engage with dominant and institutional forms of literacy and how this affects their identities. Powerful social institutions, as I will show, often rely on specific literacy practices to maintain and reproduce existing structures. However, local literacy practices can also be used to challenge and change existing hierarchies. Different social and individual forces work to promote or refute forms of knowledge and structures of communication that serve various actors' needs. It would therefore be wrong to conceptualise literacy as being 'oppressive' per se or as automatically liberating.

Nevertheless it may appear that some literacies, for example those used in schools, have an inherent 'power potential'. But even such literacies are not dominant in every context. While English literacy undoubtedly has a powerful position in Namibia because of its function as official language, in some social contexts, for example in church, it is comparatively less important and is often 'dominated' by local literacies. It is the task of the ethnographer of literacy to study these power dynamics.

According to Foucault (1980), power relations operate at all levels of society and implicate each and everybody, albeit not necessarily in an oppressive way. Although the NLPN subjects its participants to a range of well-presented powerful discourses, the learners and teachers with whom I worked successfully negotiated their own space and priorities within and beyond the boundaries of what literacies were fostered from above (see Chapter 10). In a similar way, in everyday life my informants engaged with dominant literacy practices in a way that cannot be limited to mere subjection but testifies their agency (cf. Holland, D. et al. 1998). In this thesis, I will show that at the heart of these moves were complex and often ambiguous processes of identification, as my informants negotiated their own sense of self in relation to the new social and political discourses that emerged in Namibia since independence. As I will show in my chapters on tourism and literacy, employing dominant discourses, that for the outsider may appear to be oppressive and destructive of local literacy practices, can be a powerful move to broaden economic opportunities and revive local cultures. Such processes are examples of how people engage with new literacy practices. This will be a recurring theme in my thesis.

The central issue regarding the conceptual knot of literacy, power and identity revolves around two processes. On the one hand, dominant discourses and their associated literacies can be used to impose new social identities (cf. Collins and Blot, forthcoming). On the other hand, my thesis contains many examples of how local people in Namibia use literacy as a powerful tool to construct and negotiate their own identities and their perceived position in the new Namibian society. The way I see literacy in these contexts, be it as a learner in Namibia's National Literacy Programme (see Chapter 10), as a customer who shops on credit (see Chapter 6), or as a local tour guide (see Chapters 7-9) is as a form of action that testifies people's capacity within a given setting, not only to transform themselves but also to challenge the forces of discourse (cf. Dreyfuss and Rabinow 1983; Schaafsma 1999).

Given the history of the Namibian people, concentrating on knowledge, power and identity in relation to literacy and adult education is a compelling but sensitive issue. Throughout the colonial period, beginning with the German occupation and leading to the South African imposed Bantu education system, local knowledge and people's own experiences and concerns were suppressed. This is an example to reveal how specific literacies, here in the context of a colonial education system, are used to impose identities. In response to the Bantu education system, literacy and adult education programmes were set up before independence as part of the resistance movement against colonial and racial oppression (Ellis 1984). These projects legitimised their own forms of knowledge. The current programme, set up after the country gained independence, shifted the focus from opposition towards the priorities of those who had taken power. As this example reveals, legitimated knowledge itself is a changing concept. The main question the new situation generates is what possibilities for different literacies and different forms of knowledge emerge in the new policy environment that has emerged since independence. And how do people position themselves vis-à-vis these new policies? Furthermore, what are the chances for local knowledge and local and popular literacies to gain cultural, economic and even symbolic capital?

7. Researching literacy as a social and discursive practice: methodology

1. Why ethnography?

To put it simply, this study is about what people do with literacy and what they think about reading and writing. Kell, quoting Reder, describes the aim of her study as to understand how literacy is 'embedded within the logic of everyday life' (Kell 1994: 14). In a similar way, the research methods I used had to

enable me to study reading and writing in the 'logic of everyday life'. In order to achieve this aim, I employed a combination of ethnographic methods, with textual and sociological discourse analysis.

The underlying presupposition is that if literacy is a social practice, it has to be researched as such, i.e. it has to be studied in context and in use. As social activities, reading and writing are embedded in a range of discursive regimes which are likely to escape any structural analysis which is content with grasping visible realities and simplistic causal relationships. As far as the NLPN is concerned, a focus on literacy and education as technical processes, or a view on planning and policy implementation as mere technocratic endeavours, cannot identify the ideas and concepts that provide the bedrock for how and what literacy is taught in the NLPN.

In order to develop a methodology suitable to the study of literacy as social and discursive practice, I adopted a holistic approach that included the people who engage in literacy, the relationships between them, the institutional setting that surrounds them, the texts they produce or reproduce and the larger context of their social and economic life (cf. Barton and Hamilton 1998). Methodologically, I drew on ethnographic techniques such as unstructured and semi-structured interviews and participant observation (see Chapter 3).

In its conventional form, ethnography is understood to involve the ethnographer's participation in people's daily lives, or in a part of their lives, for an extended period of time (Hammersley and Atkinson 1996). Usually it is assumed that ethnographers study only one or a small number of settings, for example schools (ibid.). Assessed against these criteria, my research is not a full fledged ethnography. Rather, I understand it as an 'ethnographic study' or as qualitative research that adopts an 'ethnographic perspective' (Bloome and Greene 1997: 183). However, I would argue that the above criteria do not adequately reflect the contemporary nature of ethnography used in anthropology, sociology and related fields. With regards to anthropology, the recent crisis of representation, that was in part triggered by the 'Writing

Culture' debate (Clifford and Marcus 1986), has catalysed the emergence of new forms of ethnography. I regard my own study as belonging to this 'experimental' vogue, as it leaves aside some of the common parameters of ethnographic research and tries out new methods. As I will explain in more detail in the next chapter, contrary to the common preference for depths and detail, my research was oriented more towards breadth and 'brief'. In a sense, my main aims were discovery and exploration rather than exhaustive analysis. The 'object' of my research and the 'field' I was working in were constructed in a much broader way than is usually the case in anthropology. Mine was a 'multi-locale' ethnography (Marcus 1986) that involved travelling within the field and work in various settings and communities.

The main reason for the above was that I set out to Namibia with the purpose of exploring literacy practices in several areas of everyday life, work and education. One of my main principles had been to let myself as much as possible be guided by the people with whom I worked in this research. The breadth of sites and settings was a direct result of my research question. Since I intended to study the relationship between literacies in the NLPN and outside, I had to include practices from both inside and outside. This required me to study a variety of contexts, as I hoped to gain an understanding of the range of literacy practices that are commonly used by adults in Namibia.

Furthermore, when I began fieldwork in Namibia, my knowledge of these practices was limited. In one case, tourism, I could hardly rely on other studies that had explored similar questions. In fact, I knew very little about 'tourism literacies' when I embarked on this research. In typical anthropological manner, I began with a broad topic and followed a 'funnel approach' (Agar 1999). However, the nature of my research question implied that I did not narrow down the 'object' of my research as much as Agar and others would perhaps have expected me to do (a more detailed discussion of my unit of study will follow in Chapter 3).

2. Combining ethnography with discourse analysis

According to Foucault, discourse analysis converges around the relationship between the statement as an event and the context which enabled it and within which it impacts on practice. Since all discursive statements are embedded in communicative situations, social practices and historically changing contexts, any study of discourse is to be firmly placed in the actual context of a 'discursive event' (Foucault 1972: 27). Any understanding of social practices needs to be located precisely in the interrelations between texts, discourses, actors and practices. Textual discourse analysis alone cannot capture these relations. Furthermore, it often suffers from a narrow perspective that limits the researcher's concern to the immediate context of production and interpretation of texts (Grillo, Pratt and Street 1987). In this study, I draw on textual analysis, but significantly broaden the context from which I take my interpretations and try to relate insights derived from a linguistic analysis with my understanding of the sociological issues that are at the core of my study.

It follows from the above that discourses cannot be understood as belonging to language alone, but need to be conceptualised as 'interwoven sets of language and practice' (Crush 1995: xiii). Accordingly, my discourse analysis is concerned with the relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive, i.e. between texts, ideologies and positions on the one hand and practices, structures and institutions on the other. In terms of methodology, I therefore have to integrate the analysis of texts with the ethnography of practices, i.e. the social activities, relationships, settings and constructs that determine the use and interpretation of texts (Grillo 1989). In order to achieve this, I develop my analysis on the basis of 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) of different ways of using and valuing literacy. By doing so, I hope to bypass the shortcomings of some discourse studies that – as part of Foucault's work – have been criticised for lacking historic and ethnographic ground (Said 2000).

As I draw on both sociological concepts of discourse and anthropological theories of culture as contested and changing (Asad 1980), my 'contexts' include economic, political, social and cultural structures that are not confined to the narrow site of my observations but trespass local and national boundaries (cf. Street 1993a). Unlike Foucault, who developed his approach through historical analyses, my primary concern is with contemporary issues of literacy and discourse in the context of a concrete case, the NLPN. However, since I deal in my study with structures and discourses that are historically and institutionally located, I have to trace back their origin and development from the period of South African occupation and the beginnings of the NLPN after independence to today.

3. Postmodernism and anthropology: critique of conventional ethnography

My understanding of ethnography is grounded in a view of social science that regards reality as always being in part socially constructed and the product of ongoing processes of meaning making. Therefore, any act of representation and interpretation that is rooted in a purely 'autonomous' perception of reality, must be rejected right from the start. The fundamental question that arose for me was how I dealt in my research with the postmodern 'predicament of culture' (Clifford 1988) and the crisis of representation it triggered.

With regards to anthropology, the crisis of representation is part of the wider debates between modernists and postmodernists and the world-wide political changes that were brought forward by the end of colonial rule. The discussion that was initiated by the 'Writing Culture' papers brought to the forefront of anthropological debate many questions that are important for this thesis. Several of the 'constructive' criticisms of poststructuralism and postmodernism are particularly relevant for my own research.

First of all, the critique of the modernist project of development and its related discourses, is an important point of departure for my own work. The

'grand narratives' (Lyotard 1979) of development and literacy no longer hold. My disenchantment with the widely propagated prospects of literacy inspired my attempts to reveal how dominant literacy practices, as they are intrinsically linked with dominant discourses, construct social meaning and promote social identities (cf. Papart 1995). Secondly, the centrality of power as a concept to understand processes of meaning making and social action at all levels of society mirrors my own understanding of society and of research.

Postmodernism's turn towards local knowledge and local agency (cf. Moore 1996) has inspired me to draw my attention to how learners and people in local communities actively engaged with and 'seized hold' (Kulick and Stroud 1993: 55) of new language and literacy practices. Accordingly, I turned my gaze towards local processes of representation, as I saw them emerging from localised power/knowledge systems (Papart 1995) that were nevertheless intrinsically linked with national and global processes. My purpose was to research the connections between knowledge, language (written and oral) and power as they were mediated in lifeworld discourses. In direct critique of modernist discourses of anthropological research, these could not be assumed, but had to be discovered.

Furthermore, the now common rejection of unifying categories and simplifying metaphors and the widely acknowledged view that 'a' culture or 'a' community is never uniform or stable are important intellectual points of departure for my own work. The view of the 'other' as an array of individual contexts and situations has paved the way for an ethnographic account that is characterised by multiple voices and personalities. To a certain extent, this allows me to dispense with the need for generalisation, but to regard diverse and partial pictures as nevertheless valuable in terms of the research product.

The postmodern vogue pushed traditional standards of judging academic research to the edge. In social anthropology, the classical ethnographic monograph is nowadays discredited as belonging to a modernist and essentially ethnocentric paradigm. It follows from the above that new standards for assessing the value of social research in its ability to

problematise social and cultural life must be found. What can be validated, nowadays is an issue of 'theoretical debate and practical experimentation' (Clifford 1986: 25). Each account in itself – including this one – is complex, multi-layered, partial and the result of a process of knowledge creation, through research, that is, itself a social and a political practice. To a certain extent, my interpretations are the results of my attempts to carry out research with the kind of carefulness and intellectual rigour that satisfies the standards of my discipline and academic background. But at the same time, they are the products of specific relations and a particular historical moment, both in my own intellectual life as well as in the development of the field of literacy and discourse studies that 'render certain things thinkable and doable' (Wickert 1998: 6).

4. Postmodernism and social science: is ethnographic research still possible?

Despite my turn to the 'postmodern', I clearly felt the pitfalls in its agenda and the dilemmas it poses for anthropological research. In its extreme form, postmodernism risks reifying differences (Bowman 1997) and 'dissolving into relativity' (Papart 1995: 265). If pushed to its extreme, postmodernism makes cultural translation or intercultural understanding impossible, i.e. social science would lose its purpose. As Gardner and Lewis (1996) have argued, there need to be what Nicholsen calls 'stopping points' (Nicholsen quoted in ibid.: 25). Since I share the view that anthropology still has a place in addressing social issues, I did not want my research to disappear into the realm of the relativist and deconstructionist. As many others, I felt that the question of validity and purpose of social research remains a central issue, even for poststructuralist and postmodernist research (James, Hockey and Dawson 1997). In a rather concrete way, this became obvious to me while I conducted fieldwork in Namibia. As I busied myself with deconstructing dominant discourses and hegemonic practices, I certainly saw the advantages of this intellectual exercise, i.e. the knowledge that can be gained

from unveiling the ideological parameters that lay beneath common discourses of literacy. But I also felt very strongly that this could not be the ultimate purpose of my research. As Escobar (1995: 16) notes, there is no point in deconstruction, if it does not lead to some form of 'reconstruction'. Furthermore, mere deconstruction was inconceivable with my identity as 'engaged practitioner' (cf. Barnett 1997).

Accordingly, I was strongly drawn to some kind of middleground between an 'empiricist theory of everything' and 'a hyperpostmodern end of everything' (Huges-Freeland, quoted in James, Hockey and Dawson 1997: 2). Papart, with respect to feminist research, defines her middleground as a 'materialist postmodernist approach' (1995: 265). What she calls 'materialist', in my understanding, is similar to the 'ethnographic' in anthropology.

What do I and others mean by the 'ethnographic'? In a recent book entitled 'Reflexive Ethnography', Davies (1999) proposes that social reality, albeit not 'fully' separate from social beings and their perception of this reality, can nevertheless be known. What she points to here is that there is a social and physical world 'out there' which, although being inextricably linked with human agency, exists outside of our conceptions (ibid.). Nevertheless, research that seeks to create knowledge about the social world, is in itself always involved in creating this same world. Language is a powerful instrument in this process. But for Davies this does not mean that knowledge is unattainable. Her principle argument to support her epistemological stance is that the interdependency between the social world and human agents as constructors of social reality cannot be confounded with the 'existential intransitivity' of society as a 'knowledgeable object' (ibid.: 19). Davies grounds her view in Baskar's realist philosophy that assumes social structures and social agents to be 'ontological realities' (ibid.: 20; Bhaskar 1989).

Anthropologists typically rely on ethnography as their principle means of knowledge creation about the ontological reality of the social world. The core of their claim to validity is that their knowledge originates in the field, in the encounter between researcher and researched and in their joint strategies of

meaning making (James, Hockey and Dawson 1997; Josephides 1997). The purpose of this form of research, according to Davies, is to develop an understanding of 'different constructions of reality' and to 'mediate' between such varying representations (Davies 1999:6).

Reflexivity is an essential component of such social research, as the researcher is part of the world she sets out to study. In ethnographic research, knowledge is produced through social interaction. To a considerable degree, the researcher participates in the production of this interaction and the observations that will become her data (ibid.). Accordingly, the implication of reflexivity for ethnography is not only to disclose (Hammersley and Atkinson's focus, 1995), but to problematise the processes of knowing. In part, this is a concern for how the ethnographer, who is situated in her own and her discipline's discourses, encounters other discourses and through a form of meta-understanding of both theirs and her discourses constructs an ethnographic account (Kell 1994).

Josephides (1997) calls this 'self-reflexive/interpretive' ethnography. According to her, in this form, ethnography albeit questioning its 'authority, does not abandon interpretation' (ibid.: 17). What I take from her is that partiality does not have to lead to relativity, but requires us to 'acknowledge gaps' and to 'remain aware of the limits' of our own research (ibid.: 31).

If we accept that ethnography's principal strength – and I am willing to do this – is its grounding in the field, can we then lean back and shake from our minds any further questioning the value and the validity of our work? We certainly cannot. Assuming that we have done an ethnography that satisfies the standards and conventions of our discipline (which in themselves are the momentary product of an ongoing and intrinsically political debate), are there any other criteria by which to assess social research? I would say, yes. In my view, the relevance of an account in addressing key social issues is crucial. I take the view that what makes an account valid is not only its scientific rigour, or its ethnographic grounding, but its ability, as a 'telling' case (Mitchell 1984), to offer new ways of addressing current social issues. It relies on the study's

potential to expose a critical and transformative perspective that is meaningful to the people with whom the research was done. With respect to studies on development, and I see my own work as belonging to this field, the main task is to provide 'critical accounts' of ongoing practices and structures of development (Gardner and Lewis 1996).

There remains with the above position a considerable amount of uncertainty and doubt. On what grounds can I make the claim that my perspective is transformative? How can I assert that my perspective is relevant to the research subjects? This study was neither an action research nor did I give up my power as the researcher who decides on the agenda and purpose of the project. Given the constraints I myself as a graduate student was subjected to, this could perhaps not have been different (see Wolf 1996). This should, however, not stay as a mere excuse for unfulfilled promises, but allow me to critically reflect on my own claims vis-à-vis the outcomes of this research and their relevance for the people with whom I worked[3].

Quite obviously, there are no easy ways out of a predicament that in its final instance may remain unresolved. If neither 'self absorbed navel gazing' (Harding 1987, quoted in Lal 1996: 207), nor the abandoning of any engaged political project is an option, Lather's conclusion may be the only possible stance: 'In an era of rampant reflexivity, just getting on with it may be the most radical action one can make' (Lather, quoted ibid.: 207).

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[3] For a discussion of the dilemmas and constraints researchers who work inside academic institutions face when they want to conduct fieldwork in a more participatory and emancipatory manner see Wolf (1996).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I introduced the topic of my research and the main questions that occupied me both in the field and while writing this thesis. While I developed the thematic grounds of my work, I discussed how as a researcher interested in questions of literacy and literacy learning among adults, I am located both socially and politically as well as theoretically and methodologically. In the following sections I discuss some of the more practical and down-to-earth questions related to the nature of my topic and the methods I used. I will argue that with the kind of questions I have chosen, my study differs considerably from classical anthropological fieldwork based on long term participant observation in confined field sites (cf. Davies 1999). Rather my study experiments with a combination of methods and an idea of the field site as encompassing a range of ideological and physical spaces.

2. Literacy events and literacy practices

In order to operationalise the idea of literacy as a social and discursive practice, I use two concepts: literacy events and literacy practices. Literacy events are defined as any communicative event or situation which involves reading and writing or a piece of text (Heath 1983; Barton and Hamilton 1998; Street 1999). Literacy practices are understood to signal the uses of reading and writing plus the values, attitudes, social conventions, ideologies and cultural models which give meaning to a literacy event (Street 1999). Literacy practices thus connect the actual process of reading or writing in a

communicative situation to the meanings and conventions attached to the use of literacy in a given context. Whilst the notion of literacy events is located at the descriptive level and helps to identify and portray different ways of using reading and writing, the concept of literacy practices entails a deeper analysis of the meanings of reading and writing in the respective situation. It is at this level that discourses become relevant.

While the above categories are useful analytical tools that I worked with throughout my research, for the purpose of analysis and comparison of different data related to literacy practices, it was necessary to further break down these concepts into their different parts. I found the elements Mary Hamilton (2000) uses for her research in the UK particularly helpful. As she and David Barton note, the study of literacy events and practices is both a study of (written) texts and of the social interaction around these texts (Barton and Hamilton 1998, 2000). In my research, I usually began with the text which in Hamilton's scheme belongs to the category of 'artefacts'. My first step was to describe the features and the content of the text as well as the activities and communication that took place around the text. In a next step, I tried to elicit information about the social and institutional context and structures (Hamilton's 'settings') that framed the particular event. From there, I proceeded to the conventions, rules and values that come to bear on a literacy event. By doing so, I attempted to gradually move from a 'thick' (Geertz 1973) or 'close' description of the event (Street 1993a) and its visible attributes towards an analysis of the practices and discourses that characterise the use of reading and writing in the given situation. I paid particular attention to the actors involved in a literacy event and the position they held in that instance. As far as possible, I tried to reveal the actors' emic understanding and view of the literacy event they were involved in.

As I tried to uncover the literacy practices that shape the way reading and writing is used in a specific event, I had to disinter its underlying discourses. Furthermore, I had to identify the social identities that circumvented the

actors' views and their interactions with each other. In terms of procedure, one could thus say that I moved from events to practices and finally to discourses. As a heuristic device, it helped me to think of the process in this way. However, from a theoretical point of view, practices and discourses are pinned at the same analytical level. Methodologically, description and analysis proceeded simultaneously rather than in distinct steps as the above scheme might suggest.

I used the concept of 'domains' of literacy practice (Barton and Hamilton 2000) in order to identify the broad areas of social activity in which literacy events appeared. However, the further I proceeded in my fieldwork, the more I became aware that the idea of the domain as a structuring category was problematic. The literacy practices that I discovered transcended and cut across domains and sites. Because of the difficulties I had in locating practices inside domains, I began to see that domains of social activities, e.g. formal education, did not necessarily correspond with distinct sets or ways of using reading and writing. Nevertheless, domains can be seen to present 'particular configurations of literacy practices' (ibid.: 11). But, as Prinsloo and Breier (1996), referring to Reder (1985), emphasise, what is important is the distinct social meanings that are attached to literacy in a domain. In other words, in each domain, literacy has particular functions and effects and is framed by specific discourses and institutional relationships. However, the same or similar ways of using reading and writing, or similar forms of texts, can be used across different sites and domains. This also means that in one site the researcher is likely to come across literacies and discourses that originate in various other domains. Remaining too close to the idea of domains, I was therefore running the danger of reifying literacy practices, whereas in reality the picture appeared to be more complex.

3. Researching literacy events and literacy practices: the case study

The above difficulties in identifying patterns of literacy practices in relation to

domains of use had implications for how I defined my case studies.

In my research, I turned my gaze away from the classical anthropological object and its corresponding 'anthropological place' (Auge 1995), the anthropologist's field, e.g. a village, a community, a neighbourhood or a factory. Instead, my field was not so much characterised by its physical location, but was situated in the conceptual realm of what I identified as groups of literacy practices and the social activities and discourses these were embedded in. In that sense, my case studies reflect my theoretical understanding of literacy practices that - similar to Gee's (1999) definition - emphasises the association of literacy with discourses.

According to Mitchell (1984), case studies provide a detailed account of a series of events. This description is characterised by its high level of detail and particularity (ibid.: 237). Such case studies are selected in order to generate theory. In a similar way, my case studies provide detailed descriptions of particular literacy events. In Chapter 7, 8 and 9 for example, I present my case study of tourism literacy practices. I describe these as ways of using written language that are common to tourism work. In these chapters, I make two important propositions. I argue that tourism literacies although similar to other commercial uses of reading and writing are 'situated' literacy practices (Barton and Hamilton 1998) whose specific forms and meanings are grounded in the social and institutional framework of tourism in Namibia. Furthermore, I make the claim that there are important insights to be gained from analysing tourism as literacy. The task of my case study is to explain what is specific about tourism literacy practices in Namibia and what makes tourism a worthwhile object of literacy research.

It follows from the above that although they were empirically grounded in specific domains or social activities (such as tourism), my cases were at the same time theoretically constructed. I constituted these cases of sets of texts, practices and discourses. What defines a case in this view is not primarily its location within a certain site or domain (see above), but its ideological

identification with specific ways of using language, ways of behaviour and available subject positions. Such identifications, albeit situated within institutional contexts, exist beyond and across the delimitations of location.

The process of constructing these analytical cases was essentially ongoing and was part of data collection, data analysis and writing (cf. Ragin and Becker 1992). Whilst much of the initial choice was informed by prior knowledge (i.e. of similar studies) and theoretical considerations, the crucial phase of establishing my cases could only start once I began to better understand the different literacy events that I observed during my fieldwork. Difficulties with commonly used categories occurred when I tried to analyse classroom practices in the NLPN and wondered whether these had to be regarded as 'schooled literacy' (Cook-Gumpertz 1986; Street and Street 1991) or were more strongly circumscribed by other social discourses. As a result, I began to understand that what was happening in the classrooms was in part due to the presence of a range of discourses and practices originating in other domains, notably work and church (see Chapters 4 and 10).

In terms of methodology, my cases evolved out of a process of comparing ideas and interpretations with empirical evidence (Ragin and Becker 1992). As analytical constructs, they are strongly influenced by the theoretical insights that governed my understanding of literacy. They are not based on empirical generalisations. Because of my own input into the construction of case studies, it was crucial to incorporate reflexivity as part and parcel of a process of interpretation that shifted between the immediacy of the field experience and the more distant cognitive enterprise of theory building (Davies 1999). My task as the researcher was to monitor this process of defining and revising the evolving concepts and to adapt data collection and interpretation accordingly.

The way I constructed my cases had implications for the sites at which I carried out research. My study was not bound to one location, but spread over many field sites, the choice of which was theoretically informed. Although I

conducted large parts of my fieldwork in Katutura, this is just one of the many locations where I worked. Katutura itself included several sites, from the literacy classes to the home of a group of local tour guides. I discovered new sites during fieldwork, e.g. the furniture shops where many of the learners bought on credit. Throughout my time in Namibia, I entered many different field sites, among them classrooms, the offices of the material developers of the NLPN, shops and banks, campsites, lodges, museum villages and Himba homesteads. However, on top of these physical sites, wherever I did fieldwork, I was at once concerned with the local world of my informants and with the global world of systems and structures that extended beyond the physical locality of each field site. Accordingly, my research and its textual representation, can best be described as a multi-locale ethnography (Marcus 1986).

4. How to research a case: interviews, observations and other methods

In this section, I give a brief overview of the methods I used in this research. The focus is on down-to-earth questions regarding different techniques and the difficulties I encountered in using them. In keeping with my claim to discuss the research process in a reflexive and integrative manner, I will come back to methods and process repeatedly in the following chapters, in an attempt to make visible and to problematise the basis of knowledge creation in this research.

1. Participant observation and interviews

I made extensive use of participant observation, as a means of gathering data on selected parts of people's lives. Each field site presented me with a unique set of research conditions. The different forms of interviews and participant observation that I made use of in these sites certify this diversity.

Given the constraints imposed due to my position as a white researcher who worked in a mainly black environment and the general division of social life in Namibia (see Chapter 4), I could not always participate in people's life in as broad a way as I might have wished. As a research technique, my participation in an event relied on the specific role that I took on. An example is my role as a tourist, when I visited museum villages or hired a local guide to visit the rock engravings of central Namibia.

Varying degrees of participation/observation shaped my perspective on the event and informed the knowledge and insight I gained (Davies 1999). As Davies argues, it is important to reflect on the way the ethnographer might be seen by the 'real' participants of the event (ibid.). As much as I agree with her claim, in practice it was not always easy to find out how I was seen by participants and how their perceptions of me might have impacted on our conversations. In cases of long-term participation, I repeatedly changed my roles, and this must have influenced how my informants viewed me. In the literacy classes for example, I usually sat at the back and remained in the position of an observer. However, at times, I was asked to assist in the teaching or to explain a word or an exercise.

Depending on where I worked, I was a more or less anonymous participant observer. When researching public literacies, I could hang around in public places without having to announce or explain my presence. In the classes, I could not avoid being an 'important' visitor who was, at least at the beginning, given much attention. There were other situations in the field when I became directly involved in an event. This was for example the case when I accompanied a group of local tour guides to a meeting with the Municipality in Windhoek. They had asked me to assist them in this meeting and I took an active part in the negotiations between the group and the officer of the Municipality (see Chapter 9).

My relationship with informants varied depending on the site, the context and the person interviewed. As I will explain in more detail later in this thesis,

my contact with local people was much influenced by race and class differences and by the continuity of apartheid structures in Namibia that imposed limitations to my involvement in community life. However, more personal relationships developed with some learners and teachers and with a few local tourism workers. In other cases, my contact with informants was ad hoc and short-term, an important factor that shaped the nature of the interaction and the kind of data gathered.

In interviews with learners, I tried to downplay my own position and introduced myself as a student, in order to mitigate status differences. Yet, these attempts and the informal and personal manner in which I conducted interviews with learners could never entirely eliminate the enormous differences that set me apart from my black counterparts. In addition to the above mentioned differences in social position due to class and race background, other factors increased the distance between me and my informants. I was much aware that because I am European, many people saw me as a representative of a continent that is seen to be economically enormously successful and influential. My educational background also played an important role, in particular in my relationship with learners and teachers in whose eyes I was a highly knowledgeable person. In general, this meant I was treated with a lot of respect which in some situations created unwanted distance. This was reflected in the way during interviews informants were in general highly attentive to my questions and rarely if ever tried to influence the nature or content of our discussions. In my contacts with education officers in the MBEC, the situation was different, as, with justification, they saw themselves as the experts on literacy in Namibia. In these contexts, my position as a postgraduate student lowered my status.

As part of my fieldwork, I conducted a series of unstructured and semi-structured interviews. In several instances, I also made use of group interviews, for example with the staff of a museum village in Kaoko. I interviewed learners, teachers, officers of the NLPN, craft vendors, tour

guides, employees of camp sites, owners of private lodges and members of NGOs and training organisations that support local tourism initiatives. The forms these interviews took varied considerably, in terms of formality, structure, length of time, etc. As is common in ethnography, I worked with a list of questions and topics to be raised, but formulated questions on the spot and did not follow a fixed sequence in which issues had to be covered[1]. But although I was committed to a participatory approach, aiming to genuinely involve informants in the formulation of ideas and topics discussed during interviews, I did not give up on my power as the researcher who set the overall agenda of the conversations.

Besides being an important source of information about events, activities and habits (e.g. did learners have a bank account?), interviews and conversations revealed invaluable insights into the perspectives of the people with whom I worked (Hammersley and Atkinson 1996). I used discourse analysis as a tool to help me analyse the content of our conversation, i.e. what discursive perspectives and subject positions informants brought forward and how these related to individual life contexts[2]. However, there are certain reservations regarding the use of discourse analysis for this purpose. It was essential that I had sufficient ethnographic knowledge of the micro and macro conditions of people's lives in order to be able to identify and understand the discourses that emerged in our conversations.

I worked as much as possible with English and to a lesser degree with Afrikaans of which I had acquired a working knowledge. I employed interpreters for interviews with people who did not speak English. To a limited extent, I could also make use of my own mother tongue, German, a minority

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[1] See Hammersley and Atkinson (1996) for more detail on this kind of flexible interview. A list of the questions I asked in interviews is included in the annex to this thesis.

[2] As an example of how discourse analysis can be used for interviews see Silverman (1993).

language in Namibia, for example when interviewing owners of private lodges. Many interviews were conducted in a mixture of English, with some Afrikaans and occasional translation into the mother tongue. After the first individual interviews with learners, I realised that some of them regarded the interview as an occasion to speak English. They were keen to answer my questions in English and only made use of the interpreter when necessary. In subsequent interviews, I responded to my informants' desire to speak English, by giving them enough time and encouragement to express themselves. In that way, some of the conversations took an unexpected turn towards being, in part, a private English lesson. The disadvantage was that limited proficiency in English at times hampered the interviewee's ability to express nuanced views. On the other hand, I learned a few important things by listening to learners speaking in English. For example, I became aware that many of them confidently used the specific terms related to housing loans, credit schemes and banking (see Chapters 5 and 6). I noticed that some of the learners who rarely spoke during the classes were much more proficient in English than I had expected.

Afrikaans was a useful language for my observations of literacy practices in public contexts where it often served as an additional language of communication. But although it was spoken by several of my informants I tried to avoid using it in interviews. Although Afrikaans fulfils an important function in interethnic communication, to date it remains bounded to its status as the language of the former – white – coloniser. Therefore, I was conscious that using Afrikaans would add to the differential position of myself and my interviewees.

Working with interpreters, of course, presents a range of problems and I am aware of the impact these have had on my research, i.e. the limitations of what can be translated (cf. Finnegan 1992). Because one of the languages I worked with, Khoekhoegowab, is nowadays rarely used for writing, it was difficult to find a translator who could provide complete written transcriptions

of the interviews[3]. Furthermore, with the three interpreters I hired, it was impossible for me to cover all the languages spoken by my informants. In these cases, I either worked with English only, used Afrikaans or relied on the abilities of my translators and my interviewees to mutually understand each others' languages. The situation was somewhat easier in Kaoko where I researched tourism literacy practices. Because the majority of people in Kaoko speak the same language, I did not have to hire several interpreters. The issue of translation was further complicated by the fact that apart from the rare occasions when I met with German-Namibians, I conducted my research in English which is not my mother tongue, but my second language.

But working with interpreters also had advantages. Both of my interpreters for Khoekhoegowab, although not directly known to the participants of the two classes we interviewed, came from the same community and were distantly related to some of the members of the group. Because of their proximity with the learners and their shared language, they established immediate and easy rapport with the interviewees and served as an important link between me and the group. Furthermore, all my translators provided invaluable support, insofar as they gave me additional information and background on issues raised by informants. In that sense, they became informants in their own right. While I had to be alert to the translator's own perspective as a filter through which in their translations they presented the interviewees' statements, I experienced this both as a limitation and as a potential resource. Although my direct access to interviewee's positions was constrained, translators could provide me with an additional viewpoint. Because all my translators were from the same communities as my other informants, despite their social position being different from the learners, I welcomed their views as a valuable perspective.

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[3] These interview transcripts are incomplete. They do not contain the original statements in Khoekhoegowab, but only the interpreter's translations of these.

2. Documents

Researching literacy, documents were at the heart of the social practices I tried to explore. I consider these as a main source of my data.

I collected and analysed a number of texts from everyday life, ranging from billboards, to loan agreements, credit cards, personal letters and guestbooks to tourism brochures. In addition, I made use of policy documents (for example on the NLPN and on community-based tourism), research and evaluation reports, newspaper articles, travel guides and the textbooks and teacher handbooks of the NLPN. My interest in these documents, including official texts such as statistics and policy papers, was driven by my understanding of these texts as 'social products' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1996: 168), not so much as evidence of factual information.

I also studied historical documents on the development of literacy since the German colonial period and the role of literacy education in the more recent past, as part of the liberation struggle. Studying the development of literacy policy prior to independence allowed me to better understand some of the present-day discourses that inform literacy policy in Namibia.

The way in which I selected and interpreted documents and texts was an essential part of how I constructed my case studies. Choosing texts, such as letters from learners or the handwritten notes of a tour guide, and deciding which ones were significant, was not only part of the process of ethnographic discovery, but was theoretically informed. My choices were based on my theoretical perspective and were part of the process of interpretation.

I used discourse analysis as the main interpretative tool to examine texts and documents. My primary concern was to identify and describe the discursively framed knowledge positions contained in these texts. In Chapter 2, I presented my concept of discourse and briefly outlined how I used this concept in my research. I will now specify how I studied discourses.

My method draws upon both Foucault's archaeology and genealogy as

well as on Fairclough's (1995) more linguistically oriented Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Foucault's work helped me to focus my attention not only on the meanings of specific discourses, but on their effects in terms of knowledge, power and self. CDA has provided important ideas for the linguistic analysis of texts, i.e. how discursive meanings are realised through specific linguistic (and other sign-based) features.

Where I differ from Fairclough (and others who follow similar approaches) is in my emphasis on practices rather than on texts. In terms of methodology, ethnography was my primary tool and discourse analysis was considered a complementary method. The reasons for my choice are grounded in the overall purpose and orientation of my research. This was supposed to be a study of the 'social uses of literacy' (Prinsloo and Breier 1996) and my attention therefore had to be on what people did with texts. Accordingly, I looked at texts as part of events and foregrounded their communicative role and effect on social activities and behaviours. At the same time, as an anthropologist, I focused on the emic views, i.e. I wanted to know how local people made use of and engaged with literacy. Both these concerns required a firm grounding in ethnography rather than just in textual analysis as in much discourse analysis.

It follows from the above that I was less concerned with the potential meanings a proposition can have, or with the intended meaning of the author (although I certainly needed to take account of the latter). Rather, my preoccupation was with the interpretations of these texts by local actors.

In order to achieve my aims, I proceeded in the following way. First, I gave preference to documents and texts that had been used in literacy events which I had had the opportunity to observe or participate in. I also used texts, for example letters that I had been given by informants and whose content and meaning I had discussed with them.

Second, I normally collected a range of other texts from the same context. I used these to compare my interpretations across different textual examples.

In order to identify the discursive origin of various statements, I had to look beyond the context in which a specific text appeared in order to discover its connections with other genres and domains. Tourism brochures for example contain informative as well as promotional elements (cf. Dann 1996). Here Fairclough's (1995) concept of interdiscursivity was helpful.

The next step then was to draw up a list of the discourses that appeared in the text. In order to find out how my informants understood and used these texts and the discourses they contained, I compared the words of the texts with statements by informants, fieldnotes and other background information. A useful exercise was to scrutinise both the document and my interview data in terms of the typifications and categorisations they contained, in an attempt to discover instances of 'normalisation' (Foucault 1978, 1980) and subjectification. Finally, I looked at metaphors and other specific linguistic devices that render specific positions pervasive, for example in the context of administrative letters. This part of the work was more closely informed by CDA (Fairclough 1995).

3. Using photographs

Throughout the two periods of fieldwork in Namibia I used photographs to document literacy events. The main purpose was to illustrate the visual environment of everyday life in Windhoek and Namibia. While I was working on tourism, I took photographs of various signs, signposts, billboards and wall inscriptions that indicated tourist attractions and tourist places such as lodges, guest houses or camp sites. I also took pictures of written texts found inside tourism facilities.

In retrospect, I realise that when I started working with photographs I had not given enough thought to how exactly I wanted to use them in my research. I was only partly aware of the different purposes they might have fulfilled. From the onset, my main purpose was to illustrate and to document the

existence, the diversity and in some cases the abundance of literacy in Namibia. As far as tourism is concerned, I wanted to reveal the importance of written signs, posters and brochures for marketing and information. Furthermore, I tried to document that workers in tourism facilities make regular use of texts. In these cases, taking photographs complemented and sometimes replaced collecting documents and literacy artefacts.

I did not use photographs for other purposes, such as elicitation (Davies 1999), i.e. I never discussed my photos with my informants or tried to use them to have them reflect on their own literacy practices. Nor did I use a participatory approach where I would have asked local people to take their own photographs (cf. Hodge and Jones, 1999).

The question the above raises is to what extent photographs in my research became more than an illustrative resource but were part of the analytical process (Davies 1999). Additionally, what exactly could photographs of literacy events contribute to my understanding of literacy as a social and discursive practice (cf. Barton et al. 1993)? A further issue that seems important is that photographs can only capture the surface, i.e. the literacy event. It therefore appears to me to be problematic to talk about photographs of literacy practices (ibid.). The researcher can, however, make inferences from the photographs that give an insight into the underlying practices and discourses. The Himba or the San, both ethnic groups that are believed to still live according to 'traditional' customs, are often shown on photographs or postcards in settings and positions that emphasise their closeness to nature. Ideologically, these photographs portray the Himba and the San as the 'noble savage' whose lifestyle and primitive character is admired by the tourists. In my chapters on tourism I use photographs as an important analytical tool to understand how tourists look at local populations. Identifying and describing the perspectives inherent in tourists' views was crucial for my attempts to capture the 'literacy work' of community based tourism enterprises and local tourism workers.

Learning about such discourses by analysing signs and brochures nevertheless required time and a lot of complementary ethnographic research in order to gain information about the strategies of users and producers of signs. Hamilton's (2000) cautionary remark on the value of a structured approach such as the one proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) resonates well with some of the difficulties I encountered when analysing photographs, brochures and other texts. In fact, the issue is not at all limited to photographs, but equally applies to my work with documents and interview material (see my earlier sections on interviews and documents). It is only honest to say that when working with photographs (and other documents) it was not always possible to collect all the information needed that would allow for an understanding of these texts not so much from a general sociological point of view, but taking into account the perspective of users and producers.

Nevertheless, there were aspects of literacy practices that could be deduced with relative ease from the pictured literacy event, e.g. the importance of the language used (Barton et al. 1993). The use of English on commercial signs, even those of local traders and home shops, struck me as an important indicator of the role and status of English as a language of communication in multilingual environments such as Katutura, the former black township of Windhoek.

The majority of the photographs I took were of artefacts. I also tried to take pictures of people using literacy and photographed learners in the classroom. However, I soon had to give up on the idea of photographing literacy use in 'natural settings', because it was inevitable that all my pictures were staged. Nevertheless, I believe they are a good illustration of some typical situations in the classrooms, in which literacy was used.

One of the principle misconceptions in using photographs or films in ethnography is to assume that as data they are objective and can give the researcher the 'realist' perspective that is so difficult to obtain in any form of social research. In contrast to this view, Emmison and Smith (2000) maintain

that photographs should be considered similar to fieldnotes or interview transcripts. They suggest that photographs are means to preserve data that need to be interpreted by the researcher. If this is the case, then even the documentation of literacy events through photographs is mediated in both time and space. The photograph is taken from a specific angle and represents the view and the interests of the photographer. Reflexivity helped me to understand how I as the photographer, in my encounter with the people and the situations I studied, 'created' the camera images of the society I represent in this thesis[4]. In doing so, I realised how important it is to contextualise each photograph taken and to be aware of the particular perspective taken by the photographer when shooting. This is no less important when photographing artefacts rather than people. While I was taking pictures of signs that indicated tourist sites and lodges, I always had to take at least two pictures of the same sign. One was a close up shot that allows the viewer to read the text of the sign. The second photo was taken from a distance, so that the surrounding space could be seen. It is only because I took these different photos that the viewer who does not know Namibia can for example understand that campsites can be found in remote rural areas. Without the photograph of the surrounding area, it would have been easy to assume that the campsite was located in a busy tourist location, next to hotels, restaurants and shops.

What is relevant for the interpretation of my own photographs equally counts for the analysis of existing images. Again, one of the difficulties is the possibility of different interpretations. Existing images are contextualised within specific discourses, for example in news discourses (Hamilton 2000), or, as in my case, in promotional tourism discourses (see Chapter 8). Through its positioning within such discourses, the image has acquired meanings that may or may not be congruent with the meanings 'read' by potential viewers. Essentially, the difficulty the visual researcher faces is that visual images are 'multiaccentual in meaning' (Hull, quoted in Emmison and Smith 2000: 40)

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[4] See also Davies (1999) for ethnographic films and photos.

and that these meanings are changing with the image's recasting in different contexts and reprints. What we can see here is that the relationship between the picture and the text is a primary factor in the construction of meaning.

5. The art of understanding and the challenges of representation: data analysis, interpretation and writing

Data analysis and interpretation followed the procedures and forms commonly known in qualitative research. Although I was inspired by some of the well known attempts to develop a more structured system of analysis, notably Glaser's and Strauss' (1967) 'grounded theory', I did not follow any of these approaches in a strict sense. Wolcott's (1994) distinction between description, analysis and interpretation, while useful as a thinking device, in practice did not seem to correspond to a process that in my own experience was much more integrative and less structured. But Wolcott's frame was useful in helping me to monitor the ongoing process of data collection, thematic coding and interpretation.

The image that in my view best characterises how the process of analysis unfolds, both in the field and back at home, is the constant voyage between data and theory, between fieldnotes and transcripts and the more or less abstract concepts and ideas that evolve in the researcher's mind and in the various notebooks, paper sheets, cards or whatever material devices s/he uses.

Fieldnotes, including those taken during or after participant observation and accounts of conversations and unstructured interviews, together with documents make up the bulk of the data that I produced and used. My collection of school exercise books and notebooks, bought in Windhoek's various supermarkets, testifies the typical ethnographer's busy and at times frantic writing activity. Fieldnotes impress by the sheer amount of densely scribbled pages. In interviews with 70 colleagues, the majority of them anthropologists, Jackson (1995) found that many of them had very ambiguous

feelings towards their fieldnotes and their epistemological status. Contrary to these rather sceptical views, I found my own scribbling to be a rich and satisfying product of my work, although only a small proportion of my initial writings has found its way into this thesis. Fieldnotes and interview transcripts are the main intermediate between the immediate experience of 'being there' and the analytical reflections that constitute the final text (ibid.). Fieldnotes embody both proximity and distance (Powdermaker 1966; Todorov 1988) and do so in a more immediate way than the later produced academic accounts. Furthermore, they are a link between the researcher and the people with whom she worked. In that sense, they are an important emotional and personal document, a notion that conflicts with their need to be 'objective' descriptions and the basis for 'scientific' analysis (Jackson 1995). Asking what fieldnotes are (Sanjek 1990), brings one back to the general question of the epistemological foundations of anthropology (and social science in general) that I discussed in the previous chapter.

In my own experience, fieldnotes are both personal experience and academic reflection. As much as they were driven by the need to make sense out of my immediate experiences, my fieldnotes were also the place for developing and adapting theories and were guided by the desire to do justice to those with whom I worked. The emotional side, the memories of feelings and impressions, fixed in my field- and headnotes (Ottenberg 1990), were part of the process of analysis. According to van Maanen (1995), this analysis is an obscure intellectual exercise that no research manual really ever discloses. For me, this process is replete with creative and imaginative elements, grounded in my empathy with and enthusiasm for the things I observed and the people whom I met. The importance of the fieldnotes thus cannot be underestimated, because as one anthropologist whom Jackson interviewed said, 'Half the work is sifting through these notes and creating something out of it' (Jackson 1995: 63).

Typing up notes, usually done in the evening or at the end of a week, while

mainly intended to produce a cleaner and more accessible description of the day's events, was a first step in the gradual move from description towards the identification of analytical concepts and ideas, as I often added emerging theoretical thoughts while I typed. When I was travelling and after my laptop had been stolen, I used a different type of notebook for these daily accounts or contented myself with an entry in the research diary. The research diary, besides being the ever attentive audience for my endless doubts and queries, my frustrations and my excitement about some ethnographic discovery, contained most of my 'analytical notes' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1996: 191). It was an important medium for sensitising concepts and tentative interpretations. At regular intervals, I copied these ideas onto bigger sheets of paper, in the form of lists, or models that I developed in an attempt to clarify and systematise my ideas, concepts and questions. Usually resulting from these visualisations, which also served as memory enhancers, were lists of further questions to ask, issues to drop or to pursue, etc. With these analytical notes, contained in the research diary and on my big sheets, I was engaged in an 'internal dialogue' (ibid.: 192), the principle tool for my reflexive ethnography. In that sense, data analysis was an intrinsic part of the fieldwork. Some of the theoretical concepts that emerged from this interpretation took the form of 'analytical metaphors' (Davies 1999: 218), or 'conceptual apparatus and imagery through which we grasp generalities and make comparisons between one setting and another' (Atkinson 1992: 12).

Back in London, the process of analysis continued in a similar way, while it merged with the production of a much more systematic account of my work, the thesis. Much time was spent reading and re-reading notes, transcripts and diary entries. Field- and headnotes proved to be essential for triggering new analyses and revising some of the previously formulated theories. Trying to get the bigger picture of emerging patterns and relationships between them now moved to the forefront of my attempts. Overall, analysis took on a slightly different character because of the pressure of writing. Concepts that appeared to be viable, building on clear indicators in my data, were quickly 'transformed'

into sentences and paragraphs. Part of this process was the necessary integration of theoretical arguments into the narratives of life and living in Namibia, as I had experienced it during my fieldwork.

The above is a process that enfolds through the writer's creation and imagination, the moments where the 'politics' and the 'poetics' of ethnographic writing (Clifford and Marcus 1986) are perhaps most visibly present. What emerged as a central force driving the analysis was the desire and need to present a convincing and readable argument. An argument that was grounded in my commitment to research as a valid and criticisable endeavour and my desire to contribute to the development of theory, policy and practice. The pitfalls awaiting me in this exercise became immediately visible: either staying too close to a description that although rich remains intellectually and politically unsatisfying, or drifting away in too high a level of interpretation and abstraction. In order to deal with the 'tension between data and analysis' (Davies 1999: 194), I tried to trace my ethnographer's path through the data, watching out for indicators that prompted concepts and making explicit the links between data and theory (Hammersley and Atkinson 1996). Once again, monitoring my analytical work was essential and prompted many revisions and reformulations.

As I faced the challenges of writing, I attempted to adequately link the process of investigation, i.e. the usual form of finding data and risking interpretations, with the written product. To do this in a detailed and thorough manner remained a challenge throughout the months of writing. My goal was to produce an ethnographic text that sought to overcome some of the problems of 'ethnographic realism' (Clifford and Marcus 1986), for example the 'disappearance' of the author in the text (van Maanen 1995: 7), without, however, abandoning the belief in the researcher's ability to produce out of her work a viable portrayal of a different culture or of some of its aspects. How this is to be achieved, remains a considerable matter of concern both for my discipline (ibid.) as well as for myself while I am writing this thesis.

In addition to the already discussed methodological self-consciousness, a particular attention towards language as a creator of meaning is demanded. Since the language and the concepts ethnographers bring with them to the field shape what they will see (ibid.), the use of such categories and terms needs to be looked at with caution. This began with my field- and headnotes and led up to the final version of the thesis. As Escobar (1995) notes, typifications and binary oppositions are at the heart of discursive constructions of social identity and set norms and agendas for behaviour and social action. But they can also define the tone of analysis in an academic text or a scientific report. And, as Foucault has taught us, it is through their status as 'scientific' knowledge that 'normalisations' (Foucault 1980: 106-7) become accepted.

The main challenge for me was how to avoid obscuring heterogeneity and portraying social life in homogenising categories, while not descending into purely idiosyncratic and descriptive accounts that make no claim to comparability and generalisability (cf. Besnier 1999). A carefulness with and scrutiny of the language was certainly required. I was aware that the usage of terms such as literacy and illiteracy can involuntarily lead to a confined perspective. As such, they remain part of the interpretation even if the researcher takes care to explain that she does not regard these as essentialist categories. In other words, such categories are part of the data in more than one way. As far as the literacy/illiteracy dichotomy is concerned, it was part of how the people with whom I worked in Namibia framed their own experience. But at the same time these terms belong to how I, as the member of a highly literate society confront issues related to reading and writing. It would therefore be wrong to claim anything different than that in this thesis, local knowledge always appears in mediated form, filtered though the researcher's discourses and perspectives. The question is whether or to what degree in my analysis I succeeded in overcoming prevailing ideas about literacy rather than perpetuating an educated person's First World discourse about the lack of education in the Third World. My hope was to provide a new account of literacy, a framework that I like to think of as productive rather than

repressive, i.e. that does not impose categories but offers these for insight and scrutiny.

In several instances in this thesis, I use an account of a 'key event' (Robinson-Pant 1997), or the presentation of a 'key text' as a starting point from which to develop my analysis. These key events serve to illustrate theoretical ideas that I developed and thus contribute to what Mitchell calls 'illuminatory cases' (Mitchell 1982: 204). In order to introduce key events, I use informants' voices (or the English translations of their words) or quotes from my fieldnotes. However, contrary to what some of the postmodern proponents of ethnographic writing (see for example Tyler 1986) seem to suggest, the inclusion of the research subjects' voices is not done in order to suggest relativity of all voices and views, neglecting my role as the composer of these voices into an argument for which ultimately I myself am responsible (Wolf 1992).

6. Summary and conclusions: is my research a 'telling' case?

I will end the discussion of theory and methodology, that I began in Chapter 2 and continued in this chapter, with a critical reflection on the kind of insights and interpretations provided by this research. My approach can be criticised for concentrating on the uses of literacy while neglecting the conceptions and practices. I would not be able to convincingly refute this criticism. The nature of my research project, i.e. the broad range of literacy practices I studied, implied a necessary compromise between breadth and depth. With the limited time available, there was not always opportunity to uncover the underlying conceptions of literacy. My position as a researcher, who by and large remained an outsider and who not unlike a traveller moved between different sites and spaces, further limited my ability to dig deeper into cultural values and personal perceptions.

As I explained in Chapter 1, my aim was first and foremost to identify and describe the uses of literacy in various contexts of everyday life and work and,

where possible, to gain an insight into the underlying discourses and values that shape reading and writing practices in these situations. Because I wanted to gain a picture of the role of literacy in daily life, not excluding from the outset any specific practice, I had to divide my time between various sites and cases. As the ethnographer, I necessarily started with the description of events that, although always entailing some degree of analysis, should not be confused with the more detailed understanding of literacy practices. Moving from an 'ethnography of events' to an 'anthropology of practices' was only possible in those cases, where I had time to dwell, to speak to people on several occasions and to observe situations and practices over a longer period of time. In all other cases, I necessarily had to remain at the surface, even if discourse analysis helped to complement and refine the insights gained through ethnography. It is the task of further research that would limit the settings and practices to not more than a few or even just one, to provide a deeper analysis of these practices.

The question that remains is, in what sense can my case, or, rather my cases, be 'telling' (Mitchell 1984: 239)? Or, to put it differently, what are they 'cases' of? They are 'telling' in their attempt to provide – despite the above limitations – not only detail (Mitchell 1984: 237), but also contextualisation and conceptualisation. To put it simply, they suggest a new way of understanding data related to literacy. They do not, however, provide empirical generalisations. My assertion is that by putting practices, activities and discourses together in the way I suggest in this thesis, a new outlook is achieved which has the potential to provide new insights into the dynamics of school/non-school literacy as well as to revise the dichotomy of literacy/illiteracy that has so far been based on narrow criteria of formal education and measurable competence. Reflexivity, defined as the researcher's efforts to examine and critically reflect on the bases of the knowledge achieved (see Davis 1999: 92), is a central part of my claim to produce insights that are empirically sound and theoretically significant.

PART II: LITERACY PRACTICES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

4. EVERYDAY LIFE LITERACY PRACTICES IN KATUTURA: 'EVERYTHING IS IN ENGLISH'

1. Introduction: the main sites of my study

The two main sites of my study were the classes of the National Literacy Programme (NLPN) and what, for want of a better expression, I have called literacies 'outside', i.e. in everyday life contexts. In the physical sense, 'outside' can mean such places as on the streets, in shops, in church, at the bank, at home or in an office. My usage of the term 'outside' therefore differs from Stites. In his study of literacy environments in China (Stites 2001), he distinguishes between 'outside' and home or household literacy environments.

In this and the following two chapters, I discuss streets, shops, banks and offices as places of literacy. Physically, in these three chapters I remain within the boundaries of Windhoek, the capital of Namibia and Katutura, its former black township. In Chapters 7, 8 and 9, I will leave Katutura in order to explore a new set of 'outside' literacy practices: the reading and writing practices of tourism workers. While I will not totally abandon the township and the city of Windhoek, I will move on to a range of new field sites, some as far as 700 miles away from Windhoek, in the far North and North-East of Namibia.

2. Katutura: from the 'Place where we do not stay' to the 'Pulse of Windhoek'[1]

Katutura, the main site of this case study, is the former township for black[2] residents of Windhoek and today remains a significant suburb of the city. Katutura, baptised by its inhabitants as a place 'where we do not have any permanent habitation'[3], was created by the South African authorities in 1959 as an area to be occupied by black residents only. The history of Katutura began with the forced removal of black citizens from the 'Old' or 'Main Location', to this newly developed area (Pendleton 1996). The word location was introduced by the German colonisers to describe an area where the black population lived separately from the whites (ibid.). The 'Main Location', built in 1912 by the then Windhoek Town Council, was the first residential area reserved exclusively for black citizens. Locations, also called 'townships', acquired particular significance in the 1970s when apartheid was 'at its worse' in Namibia (Pendleton 1997: 4).

Although when Namibia finally gained independence from South Africa in 1990, apartheid terminology was officially abolished, still today many

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[1] This is how Katutura is presented in Windhoek's Tourism Guide, City of Windhoek, Colourgem Advertising (no date).

[2] If I use the terms black, coloured and white, this is without racist intention. Black or black people refers to people of indigenous African origin. Whites are people of European origin, although many of them were born in Africa. Coloured refers to people of mixed ancestry, i.e. black and white. These terms were introduced by the German and South African colonisers and gained particular importance when apartheid was implemented in Namibia. Since they continue to be used in post-apartheid Namibia, I have decided to use them in my thesis.

I also make extensive use of ethnic names such as 'Herero', 'Nama' or 'Afrikaaner'. Again, these terms are not essentialist categories, but social constructs. They embody the complex histories of colonial and post-colonial categorisations and reflect the sensitivity of inter-ethnic relationships before and since independence.

[3] See Pendleton (1996: 33). In his first study on Katutura, based on fieldwork conducted between 1968 and 1970, Pendleton called Katutura 'the place where we do not stay'.

Namibians refer to the former black and coloured areas as locations and townships[4].

In 1959, the Windhoek Municipality, supported by the South African government, decided to build a new location north-west of Windhoek. All residents of the 'Old Location', that was situated too close to the growing white areas of Windhoek, were to be moved to the new township. Eleven people were killed by the police and many more were wounded, when residents of the Old Location opposed the forced move to Katutura. As a result of the confrontation, many saw no choice but to accept the move. However, Katutura became the 'place where we do not want to stay' and a symbol of black opposition against the implementation of apartheid rules in Namibia (Pendleton 1996: 30)

According to a study of 1995, 60% of Windhoek's population live in Katutura which makes it by far the biggest suburb of the capital[5]. But despite the government's many efforts to overcome the legacies of apartheid, Katutura remains an almost entirely black neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the Katutura of today is economically and socially much more diversified than it used to be (ibid.). Residences range from the now run down houses built by the South African government in the late 1950s, the partly renovated 'single quarters'[6], to shacks made of metal sheeting and the modern bungalows of 'luxury hill', Katutura's new middle class area. The centre of Katutura, along 'Independence Avenue', the main road leading from Windhoek over the highway to Katutura, hosts a modern shopping area with supermarkets,

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[4] In the following, I have tried as much as possible to avoid terms such as township or location and to use 'suburb' or neighbourhood instead. However, I also wanted my own description to be consistent with the terms used by my informants. Therefore, at times, I use township and location when referring to Katutura and other parts of Windhoek.

[5] The same study reports that all the white suburbs together contain 28% of Windhoek's population (Tvedten and Mupotola 1995: 15).

[6] These were built for migrant workers, whose families were prevented by law to join them in Windhoek, at a time when apartheid was at its peak in Namibia.

furniture shops and banks, as well as the market area with small stores that was built by the Municipality.

Despite the changes in its internal landscape, Katutura remains a world apart. For the visitor from Europe, the boundary between the city centre and Katutura marks the division between two worlds, one that is reminiscent of a middle-sized German town, the other much closer to what the traveller's romantic imagination may believe to be the authentic modern Africa.

In the years since independence, Katutura has experienced tremendous growth[7]. Nowadays the old township is surrounded by new suburbs where those who have a minimum of financial resources, with the help of government loans and housing projects, can acquire land and build new homes[8]. The largest extensions to the old township, however, are the 'informal settlements', squatter areas that are legally recognised by the Municipality[9]. In 1995, it was estimated that about 17 to 20% of the city's population lived in these informal settlements (Tvedten and Mupotola 1995), while the population of Katutura was estimated to be over 110,000 in 1996 (Pendleton 1997). The total population of Windhoek was about 200,000 in 1999 (Halbach 2000).

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[7] In 1997, the urban growth rate of Windhoek was estimated at 4.5% by the National Housing Policy. Others assume it to be higher, at approximately 7% per year (Seckelmann 1997: 10).

[8] Several of the learners with whom I worked lived in these new suburbs or had acquired land there in order to build a house for themselves and their families. Although formally these suburbs (Okuryangawa, Hakahana, Big Bend and Goreangab) that are located at the north-western end of Katutura, are not part of the 'old' township, for ease of presentation, I use the term Katutura or Greater Katutura, to refer to the entire area, including the newly established north-western suburbs with their formal housing and the informal settlements and squatter areas. For more information on Katutura in the 1990s see (Pendleton 1997).

[9] These informal settlements are equipped with a minimum of community services provided by the Municipality. For more information on informal settlements see Peyroux and Graeffe (1995).

The informal settlements are set up by the authorities in an attempt to deal with the huge shortage in urban living space and cheap housing. Their orderly rows of identical looking shacks built of corrugated iron sheets spread over the hills surrounding the old Katutura. Each shack has a number, written in huge black letters on its walls, that certifies the occupant's legal status as a resident of the city of Windhoek.

Inside the boundaries of the old quarters of Katutura lie further illegal squatter areas, the dwellings of those who come to join their families in town, have not been assigned a plot, settle in their relatives' backyards or on any open space and do not register with the Municipality. In most cases, this means a shack, built of waste materials, and, if lucky, access to a nearby source of water. Many residents of Katutura rent a piece of land on somebody else's property where they erect a small shack or hut.

The area called Katutura and the various settlements that surround it host a large variety of people and of living circumstances, from the relatively well-off government official who built himself a nice house on the hills of Katutura, to the unemployed single mother with five children, who lives in a shack, without bed or blanket, and struggles for her family's daily survival. People living in Katutura come from all parts of the country; they represent the country's different ethnic and linguistic groups. Under the apartheid system, the township was divided into sections reserved for the different ethnic groups. Although officially abolished, today many people still live in the area that was originally assigned to them. Big black letters on the doors of each house – N for Nama, O for Ovambo, D for Damara and H for Herero – served to identify the ethnic origin of its occupants (see next page *Figure 4.1*). Each house was also given a number that identified the plot on which it was built. Although no longer having any administrative or political significance, these remnants of apartheid literacies remain as visible signs of the old ideology and its spatial representation.

Figure 4.1: House in Katutura

Despite socio-economic and ethnic diversity, people in Katutura have many things in common. Most came to the city for the same reasons. As the main administrative and economic centre of the country, Windhoek has always attracted migrants from the rural areas and smaller towns. However, under apartheid, the pass laws seriously restricted the movements of black and coloured Namibians. Today, the main reasons why people come relate to the search for jobs and money (Pendleton 1996). According to a survey carried out in 1991, 81% of the adult population of Katutura migrated to the town, whereas only 19% were born there (Frayne 1992). Moving to the city brings with it many changes in lifestyle and the proximity with modern bureaucratic and commercial institutions, many of which make use of literacy and discourse practices that are culturally and formally very different from the migrants' home practices.

Another common experience for the residents of Katutura is that they either work in the centre of Windhoek, or go there to look for work every day. According to a survey carried out in 1996, an estimated 65% of its population

was working (Pendleton 1997)[10]. Katutura itself has limited formal employment and the informal sector, despite offering opportunities for many, cannot provide an income for all. Every morning, the many taxi drivers of Katutura take people to the business district, the industrial areas and the white suburbs, where they work as domestic workers, as cleaners, police men, security guards, clerks, shop assistants and government officials. Many others take the municipal buses that leave Katutura early in the morning and drive back every afternoon at five.

3. Working as a white researcher in Katutura

I got to know Katutura through my visits to the National Literacy Programme of Namibia's (NLPN) literacy classes. At the time of my fieldwork, the NLPN ran about 40 classes in the old centre of Katutura and many more in the surrounding neighbourhoods and informal settlements. Classes took place either early in the morning, around lunchtime, or in the evenings, usually from five to seven or six to eight o'clock. Learners met three times a week for two hours, from Mondays to Wednesdays or Tuesdays to Thursdays.

Throughout both of my stays in Namibia, I attended four groups on a regular basis: two evening groups in the central area of Katutura, one lunchtime group at the Katutura State Hospital and another that met at the Ministry of Basic Education, Sports and Culture which is located in the government park, close to the city centre of Windhoek[11].

It was through my visits to these classes that I met most of the people who worked with me in this research. But my access to the people of Katutura,

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[10] This percentage includes employment in the formal as well as in the informal sector of the economy.

[11] I attended these classes once or twice a week over a course of altogether ten months, five months in 1999 and five months in 2000. In addition, I visited a number of other classes, in the informal settlements, in other neighbourhoods near Katutura, as well as in the rural areas close to Windhoek. More information on the classes I visited during my fieldwork is provided in the annex.

despite the length of my stay in Windhoek and the close relationship I developed with a small group of learners and teachers, remained limited. In many ways, this was the result of the continuing legacies of apartheid and the fact that as a white researcher from Europe, I did not really have a place in Katutura. Other factors determined the roles assigned to me by the groups, e.g. the fact that I was introduced to the classes by the District Literacy Officers and therefore was seen as connected to the central and regional offices of the programme that are located in the city.

Various factors contributed to my situation in Windhoek. Security concerns and local conventions limited the scope of what as a white female researcher I was able to do. The extent to which this was true forced me to question the appropriateness of my project. Until I bought a car, it was for example difficult for me to visit evening classes in Katutura. Finding a taxi to take me to Katutura in general was not a problem, although I must have been one of the few whites who trusted the local cab drivers. But the way back towards town at seven or eight o'clock in the evening, when it was already dark, was difficult and I was advised not to be on the streets on my own in the dark. During the winter months (June to August), many literacy classes finished their lessons at six o'clock, because the learners, most of whom were women, did not feel safe to walk back home in the dark.

My situation was much improved when after my first six weeks in Windhoek, I got my own car. However, an important fact remained throughout my more than ten months in Namibia. My own home was always far away from where the learners lived, in the city centre or the white neighbourhoods of Windhoek. It was not possible for me to move to Katutura. Even today, it is very unusual for any white person, Namibian or foreigner, to even visit Katutura, much less to live there. Racial prejudices are wide-spread and most of Windhoek's white population would never venture an excursion into their black neighbours' areas and homes. Katutura is regarded by many as a poor society, stricken by unemployment, lack of skills, crime, disease and alcoholism. These stereotypes, which make the presence of whites in

Katutura highly unusual, made it advisable for me not to settle in the township[12].

There were both advantages and disadvantages related to my position. Not being able to wander around Katutura on my own, for example, was a disadvantage because it limited my ability to observe everyday life uses of literacy (cf. McEwan and Malan 1996). That I could not live in Katutura severely restricted my ability to develop close friendships with people and to research home literacies. In other contexts, my position as a white European, who speaks English and German, was an advantage. It facilitated my contact with Ministries and officials whom I interviewed for my study. My German background made access to private tourism facilities, many of which are owned by German-Namibians, easier.

As a result of the above constraints, throughout my fieldwork, in many ways I remained the visiting researcher, going in and out, driving back and forth, between Windhoek and Katutura. Anthropologists, despite all their attempts to participate, never become a part of the society they research (Agar 1999). In my case, the limits to participation and integration were greater than in other fieldwork situations. This strongly impacted on the methodologies I employed, on the overall research design and the questions I explored. In particular, it entailed a thorough examination of the different sources of data I would be able to draw upon. Not only had I, as every other ethnographer, to ensure that I was aware of the models and concepts that underpinned my observations and analysis. I also had to be particularly careful to eschew creating narratives that were not firmly grounded in ethnographic data. The latter point remained challenging throughout the process of fieldwork and writing, constantly reminding me of how easy it is to get entangled in one's own creations, the dangers of 'writing culture' (Clifford and Marcus 1986).

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[12] DABE, in particular, was concerned for my security. Staff helped a lot to ensure my safety while working in Katutura, in particular during the first weeks, when I did

Despite the above mentioned difficulties in carrying out research in Katutura, I easily gained access to the literacy groups and I never felt that I was not welcomed in the classes. During my first weeks in Namibia, I often depended on the learners' or the teachers' help. In these situations, people always took care of me with exceptional warmth and friendliness which largely contributed to my feeling of being accepted by the groups, despite the otherwise huge differences that separated us from each other. At times, when I got lost in Katutura or needed help to find a taxi, the roles of our encounter were reversed, me becoming the learner who needed to be taught about local customs and conventions.

In general, our contacts were shaped by uncertainty on the side of learners and teachers as to what my role and my position was. This was in part due to the fact that none of the classes I worked with had been visited by a researcher or an evaluator before. More unusual even, I did not content myself with one or two visits, but kept on coming again and again. I intentionally arrived early for the lessons, so as to increase the time I could spend in informal conversations with learners while we were waiting for the class to begin. After the lessons, I sometimes offered to drive some of the learners or the teacher home. Although these conversations with learners were often complicated by linguistic difficulties[13], they were an invaluable source of information. Much of my knowledge about literacy and life in Katutura comes from these at times very personal discussions with learners and teachers.

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not yet have a car.

[13] Whenever possible, I tried to be accompanied by one of my interpreters, because many of the learners could not speak English or were too shy to do so. When I went to Katutura on my own, I often asked the teachers to help out with translations.

4. Choosing field sites: beyond the literacy classes

Public, bureaucratic and commercial contexts and practices in which literacy plays an important part were at the heart of my fieldwork in Katutura. To a lesser extent, I also included religious contexts in my study. Because of my position as a white researcher in Katutura and my limited access to people's homes, it was difficult to study what is usually called home or family literacies. The data on home literacies I draw on primarily comes from interviews with learners. Only in a few cases is this complemented by data from field observations.

Many of the public literacy practices that I discuss in this thesis are 'public' in the true sense of the word. Because they take place in public places, they had the advantage of being easily accessible and observable for me. Many public literacies learners of the NLPN are involved in, for example shopping, are not restricted to Katutura itself. People move back and forth between the city centre and Katutura on a daily basis, they go to work in Windhoek, they shop, go to the post office, etc. Therefore, I also observed public literacy events in the city centre where it was easier for me to hang around without being noticed or causing a stir.

Researching public and commercial literacies coincided with my interest in English and English literacy. I had arrived in Namibia with a strong interest in the role of English in everyday life literacies and in the classrooms of the NLPN. Insights gained during my first weeks of fieldwork in the country confirmed this choice. Soon after my arrival, when I started to observe life in Windhoek and in Katutura and listened to conversations of people on the streets and in public places, I recognised the strong presence of English in all public, commercial and institutional domains of social life. This was later confirmed by more detailed observations and by the findings from my interviews.

In my informal discussions with learners and promoters of the NLPN, the importance of English and the need to learn English was expressed again and

again. In interviews and group discussions, learners repeatedly stressed their desire to learn English as their main motivation for attending the classes. However, they often stated their reasons in relatively abstract terms, e.g. that English was now the official language of the country and much needed for 'communication'. I therefore felt it necessary to find out more about the situations and contexts in daily life that require the use of oral and written English. Asking about various activities and observing people engaged in these same activities, helped me to understand much better when, where and how often people actually use English.

My observations soon drew me to the dominance of English as the main language used for writing and printed documents in public, commercial and bureaucratic contexts. Many social practices in Katutura and in Windhoek are marked by the use of English texts or documents. These texts range from street signs, advertisements on local shops and bars, to graffiti and bank forms. By contrast, the indigenous African languages are rarely used for writing, except for private letters and in religious contexts. Because of its former official status and its currency as a language of communication, Afrikaans still has a function in some contexts of written communication, e.g. some bank forms are still printed in both English and Afrikaans and patient information leaflets are written in both languages. But apart from these exceptions, the picture that emerges is that English is the dominant literacy in all public and commercial domains. Learners and teachers whom I met in my research were regularly engaged in a wide range of such uses of English literacy.

Despite this dominance of English literacy, there appears to be no such thing as a monolingual literacy event in Katutura. In general, literacy in Katutura is multilingual. Many literacy events gather around a piece of text written in English literacy, but 'talk around the text' (Jones 2000a: 71) often takes place in one or more of the indigenous African languages, although it can include some English and/or Afrikaans.

In this and the following two chapters, I describe various examples of everyday life literacy practices that illustrate the role of reading and writing in different institutional and discursive contexts of ordinary life in Katutura. What I present is anything but an exhaustive list of literacy practices in the township. Out of the many uses of literacy, in- and outside the classes, that I observed and discussed with learners, I chose some that I studied in more detail and will discuss here.

Different criteria guided my choice. Apart from practical considerations (see above), I was guided by my initial research question. Therefore, I was particularly interested in literacy practices that might generate insights into the relationship between literacy as taught and practised in the NLPN and uses of reading and writing in everyday life.

Furthermore, I let myself be guided by the learners as I hoped as much as possible to take up issues that are relevant to them. Accordingly, I listened to the frequency and intensity with which they discussed certain aspects of their lives. Over the months, we talked about many things, e.g. their jobs, their families, their problems with money, etc. It was thanks to these conversations that I became interested in issues such as housing and buying on credit and realised their significance in terms of literacy. As my attention was drawn to economic factors, I realised how important literacy is in contexts that have to do with the search for and the use of resources. Accordingly, I decided to give particular attention to the relationship of literacy with struggles to obtain and control material resources.

The relationship between literacies 'outside' and literacies 'inside', i.e. in the National Literacy Programme, will be an underlying theme throughout the presentation of everyday life practices. The way I have designed this is although I foreground the 'outside', I will continuously signal the 'inside'. i.e. classroom practices. Chapters 5 and 6, that follow the current one, continue the discussion of everyday life literacy practices in Katutura and Windhoek. In Chapters 7, 8 and 9, I remain in the 'outside' but turn to the work-related

literacy practices of tourism. In Chapter 10, I finally reverse the order of emphasis, move back to the NLPN and put the classrooms centre stage.

5. Street literacies

As part of my research, I documented the visual literacy environment (Barton and Hamilton 1998) of Katutura and Windhoek. Rather than speaking of the literacy or the literate environment, a term commonly used in the literature (see for example Lazarus 1982; Hamadache and Martin 1986; Bhola 1994), I call these literacy practices, 'street' (see also Stites 2001) or 'city' literacies (Gregory and Williams 2000).

In Katutura, I took photographs of signs, posters, notice boards, graffiti, etc. The main purpose of this was to document the amount of literacy people are involved in right outside their doorsteps. Although much of people's daily reading and writing may be done unconsciously and automatically, i.e. recognising that the milk carton is indeed a milk carton and does not contain juice, these situations should nevertheless be regarded as a central part of everyday life literacies. As much as possible, I tried to include in my collection such ordinary activities that may be too insignificant and too small to be noticed by anybody, except the consciously looking anthropologist.

Much of the literature on literacy education in the developing world, in so-called illiterate or oral societies, begins with the assumption that many communities in the 'developing world' in their daily life have little contact with written texts and that the literate environment needs to be developed (see for example Ouane 1999). While this may to a certain extent be the case in rural areas[14], in the urban areas, citizens are in fact surrounded by a rich literacy environment. In the case of Katutura, one also needs to take into account the

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[14] In my chapters on tourism and literacy, I show that even the sparsely populated regions of Damaraland and Kaokoveld are not entirely devoid of any public literacy practices. Many of these are the result of the presence of tourists in these areas (see Chapter 8).

fact that most of its residents spend an enormous amount of their time in the central district of Windhoek. Like every other modern city, Windhoek is full of literacy, from traffic signs to adverts, billboards and neon signs.

How much there is, in terms of literacy, also depends on how one defines what literacy is, i.e. to what extent we acknowledge the role of visual codes and other media, e.g. television, as communicative practices. At the time of my research, a South African soap opera was extremely popular in Katutura. This programme used different languages. While many of the dialogues were conducted in English, others were in Afrikaans or in a local language. The soap was not only an important informal learning event, which without doubt contributed to many people's proficiency in English, it also included some reading. Whenever the characters spoke in local languages, the dialogue was subtitled in English. Several learners told me that they liked these subtitles and the occasional titles screened in during the evening news, because they made it easier for them to understand the programme.

Apart from the flickering images of the television screens that even the visitor who is driving through the streets of Katutura cannot fail to see, the first thing anybody who enters the suburb notices is the red and white Coca-Cola signs (see next page *Figure 4.2*). These can be found even in the remotest parts of the informal settlements. Next to the Coca-Cola signs, the amount of graffiti and wall paintings on the houses and shacks of the suburb is striking (see next page *Figure 4.3*).

Figure 4.2: Coca-Cola signs in Katutura

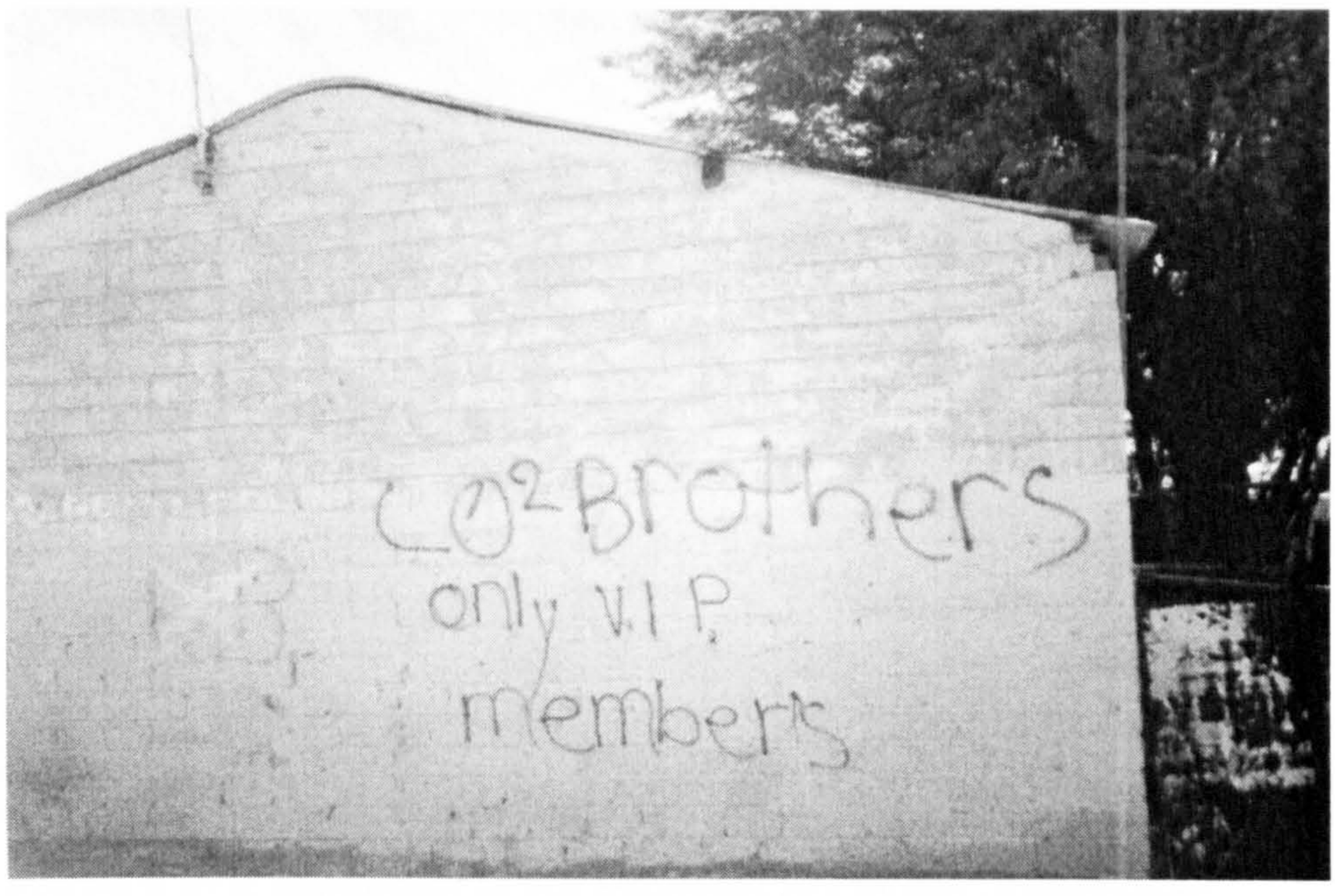

Figure 4.3: Graffiti in Katutura

In the central areas of Katutura, commercial literacy practices are dominated by the huge advertising spaces of the multi-national companies and big chain stores. But as soon as one leaves the central commercial area of Katutura with its formal economy and enters the realm of the informal economy, the bright colours of the adverts begin to fade and there are no

more neon signs or iron plates. Instead, everywhere, on houses, shacks and stalls are self-made boards and handwritten inscriptions. Signs, made of wood, cardboard or other cheap materials, direct the visitor to a shebeen (a local pub) or a cuca shop (a small grocery shop). Other signs invite one to have a haircut, a dress made or a radio repaired. These literacies are the advertising campaigns of local businesses. They reflect the need for intensive publicity in a local informal economy that is characterised by a high amount of competition, but limited demand and purchasing power. In general, these commercial literacies, although obviously made by the people themselves, are in English (see *Figure 4.4*). Some of these literacies are relatively permanent, while others, for example posters that advertise local events and concerts, come and go.

Figure 4.4: A signboard in the township of Opuwo, Kaokoveld

Another group of literacy practices in Katutura are public notices and official signs and announcements by the Municipality or the local community. To this group belong the identification numbers on houses and shacks. Originally serving legal purposes (which they still do in the informal settlements), nowadays, their main function is to identify someone's home and to direct visitors to the place where one stays. When I asked learners

where they lived, they often replied by saying for example that they live in 'Damara 40', meaning the house that has the number 40 in the former Damara section.

While I worked in Katutura, I collected examples of many other 'small' literacy practices that could be added to the above list, from the fashion for T-shirts with printed slogans (cf. Hamilton 2000) to the empty beer bottles and Coca-Cola cans that were lying around everywhere. The NLPN made use of this fashion for logos on National Literacy Day in September 2000. At the celebrations, all participants wore T-shirts and caps with the official logo of the programme. Another common literacy practice that I observed in the township and in the city centre involves public phone boxes.

Living in Windhoek, visiting Katutura and travelling through the country, I noticed how frequently Namibians use public phone boxes. In Katutura, many people are not connected to the local telephone system. They make their calls from public phone boxes or from phone shops. Phone shops are frequent businesses in Katutura, usually run from a private house or a shack. Mobile phones, called 'cell' phones, are common among the white and black middle class, but few people in Katutura can afford them. Phoning may not appear to have much to do with literacy, because the conversation itself is oral. But there is quite a bit of literacy involved in making a phone call at a public phone box. Linking numbers and names, counting money (if coins are used), inserting the phone card, knowing how much credit it has, dialling a number, understanding how much money is left while on the phone, are just some examples of what is involved.

6. Workplace literacies, school knowledge and the role of English for employment

1. Introduction

The majority of the learners I met in the literacy classes had fulltime employment, either as cleaners or as domestic workers. Several others ran a small business from home. For some, this was their only source of income.

In April 1999, shortly before I began my fieldwork in Namibia, two new literacy classes for government employees were opened at the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (MBEC)[15]. These two groups were among the first learners I met when I began my research in May 1999. Throughout my fieldwork in 1999 and in 2000, I visited one of these literacy groups on a weekly basis. This group, a Stage 4 class, met every Monday to Wednesday, from 1 to 3pm in an office that was part of the Division of Adult Basic Education (DABE), the head office of the National Literacy Programme[16]. The group had between 10 to 20 participants, but fluctuation was high, with frequent drop-outs – although many of them temporary – and regular newcomers. However, there were about ten learners who attended the class continually. Apart from the two male participants, one a support worker, the other a driver, all the other regulars in the class were women who worked as

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15 These classes were opened in an effort by the NLPN to widen access to the literacy programme. Classes were also provided in the government hospitals in Windhoek and Katutura. These groups followed the same programme and used the same materials as all other classes, a separate curriculum for reading and writing at the workplace had not been developed.

16 Following an agreement between the government and the NLPN, participants were given an extra lunch hour to allow them to attend the classes.

cleaners for the government. Several of them were employees of the MBEC[17]. All lived in Katutura.

2. Cleaners and domestic workers: non-literate work in a literate environment

At first sight, there appeared to be few connections between the literacy classes, or between the kind of literacy learned in the classes, and uses of reading and writing at the workplace. In general, being a cleaner or a domestic worker required very little reading and writing (cf. Breier 1994). The work was manual and revolved around the same daily tasks. In the Ministries, cleaners swept floors, cleaned offices, emptied waste bins and washed up coffee cups and saucers. The only learner who had to do considerably more reading and writing was John, the driver[18]. Each time he left the government garage he had to complete a form. When he came back, the security guards at the entrance requested him to complete yet another form. He also had to keep a daily report of his journeys. All the forms he used were in English.

Occasionally, the cleaners in the Ministry and in the hospital[19] had to sign a leave form or to fill out an order form for cleaning products. Another sporadic literacy activity was reading the notice board in the main corridor of the Ministry. On one occasion during my second visit, a letter from the staff association inviting everybody to attend a meeting had been put up on the

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[17] Since DABE had provided me with an office that I used throughout my stay in Windhoek, I became friends with some of these women, whom I met regularly as they cleaned the floors on the corridors and emptied the waste bin in my office. Seeing me in a role that looked similar to the work of the officers in the Ministry certainly influenced the way these cleaners approached me. Although they knew that I was a student, they nevertheless regarded me as a person who was associated with the Ministry and therefore had status.

[18] See also Breier, Taetsane and Sait (1996) on taxi drivers in South Africa.

[19] Another literacy class, which I visited regularly, was a class for employees of the Katutura State Hospital. It had been initiated following an agreement between the NLPN and the Ministry of Health and Social Services.

notice board. The following week, when I arrived for the class, none of the learners were present, because they all attended the meeting that had been announced in the circular.

Despite being surrounded by an environment that mainly functions in English, most of the cleaners had to speak very little English at work. In the case of domestic workers, however, this depended on their employers. Those who worked for white families mostly used Afrikaans. Because Albertine's employers were a Canadian family, she had to speak English at work. In the Ministry and the hospital, the cleaners used their own language or Afrikaans when speaking to their supervisors. With colleagues, they communicated in a local language or in Afrikaans and in rare situations might even use English. One of the cleaners in the Ministry told me, that occasionally, she might be addressed in English by a visitor or a foreign employee. But apart from Albertine, John was the only learner I met who had to speak English regularly. He often had to drive to the northern parts of Namibia where neither his own language nor Afrikaans are spoken.

In my conversations with the learners from the MBEC class, none of them ever mentioned any difficulties with reading and writing at work. Although some of them remembered situations where their lack of proficiency in English had embarrassed them, none recalled any serious problems. It seemed that what had brought the cleaners to the literacy class had little to do with their current work.

The situation was not much different for the domestic workers whom I met in the evenings classes in Katutura. Most of them worked full-time, others two or three days a week. Their employers were families, who lived in the former white suburbs of Windhoek, on the other side of town, in the opposite direction of Katutura. Being a domestic worker involved many tasks, from cleaning, washing, ironing to child care and in one case even nursing the sick husband of the family. In general, domestic workers do not need to read and write at work (cf. Breier 1994; Malan 1996a). When they are alone in the house, they may answer the telephone and write down the name and the

number of the caller (Breier 1994). Ana, a learner from a class in Katutura, spent some time every day reading to the sick husband of the family she worked for. The only other reading activity domestic workers mentioned was reading magazines that they got from their employers and read at home.

Rockhill notes that it is difficult to get accounts of literacy work women do at home, because these literacies are often invisible and the women themselves do not notice them (Rockhill 1993). I made similar experiences when interviewing domestic workers and cleaners about their reading and writing at work. A lot of the reading they did was small and hidden in the 'real' tasks involved, i.e. setting the temperature on an iron (Breier 1994). The cleaners were not aware of these literacies and my direct questions often elicited few answers. Similar difficulties when interviewing people about their uses of literacy have been noticed by other researchers (Barton and Hamilton 1998). In my own interviews, I asked many questions that were not directly about literacy, but had to do with activities such as shopping or going to the bank. From the information my respondents provided, I then tried to elicit the literacy-related aspects of these activities. Wherever possible, I tried to complement the information received in interviews and informal discussions with data obtained through observations. As far as domestic workers' literacies were concerned, my own situation as a co-resident in flats rented by European friends, gave me ample opportunity to observe the many literacy tasks our cleaning ladies had to cope with. These ranged from counting their pay (which we usually left for them on the kitchen table) to operating the washing machine.

Although the cleaners and domestic workers who were my informants made comparatively few direct uses of literacy at work, their workplace brought them close to office and home literacy practices that were different from their own personal and family uses of reading and writing. The cleaners' daily presence in the Ministry engaged them in a range of office literacies that they got to know well even without taking active part in them. In a similar way, domestic workers could become immersed in the typical literacy practices of

their middle-class educated employers. These ranged from their patron's magazines and books, shopping lists and notes left for the children, to the presence of computers, school books, etc. Albertine told me that her employers had a fax machine at home. They had shown her how to switch on the machine in case somebody phoned and wanted to send a message.

In her study of literacy in different communities in the Philippines, Doronila (1996) makes a similar point. She argues that people who themselves may not necessarily have a broad range of literacy skills, can nevertheless be involved in many literacy practices.

For the cleaners and domestic workers, whom I met in the literacy classes of the NLPN, the proximity to the literacy practices of middle class families and government offices, impacted on their own understanding of reading and writing. Those who worked in the Ministry noticed the dominance of English in the administrative world of government where almost all written communication was carried out in the official language. Other prominent literacy practices in offices and homes were associated with computers, typing machines, faxes and overhead projectors.

The cleaners' and workers' daily exposure to these worlds and the social and material comfort their members indulged in, did not remain without effect on their own identities as belonging to a low class profession and low income group. For many of the cleaners and domestic workers, it was their feeling of being uneducated and their lack of status in society that brought them to the literacy class.

Albertine, speaking about herself and the family for whom she worked, explained it like this:

All the people with whom I work completed the school level, except me, this is why I have decided to join the (literacy) programme[20].

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[20] Interview with Albertine, 37 years old, domestic worker, 19.6.2000, original in English with occasional translation from Otjiherero and Afrikaans.

Albertine attended school for five years. When I met her, she was a confident reader and she was proficient in English. What she meant by 'completing' the 'school level' is to attain at least grade 10, or even grade 12 and pass her school leaving exam. The above shows that Albertine thought of literacy not in terms of its functional effect. For her it was synonymous with education and had an important symbolic value.

3. Literacy and certificates: aspirations for a better life

I want to learn more to get a certificate, because I want to be promoted to become a clerk[21].

What brought the cleaners at the MBEC and the domestic workers whom I met in classes in Katutura to the literacy programme were their aspirations to further their education and to gain professional qualifications. Many of them were dissatisfied with their current occupation, its low status and low payment. Most of the learners I met in the Ministry were young to middle-aged women, several of them single mothers. For one reason or another, they had left school at a relatively early age, a fact most of them regretted. They hoped that they would still get an opportunity to further their education, or to gain professional skills. Ultimately, their dream was to leave their jobs as cleaners, to find a better occupation and to make a better income.

Cleaners were on the lowest levels of wage scales in the public service. Domestic workers often received very low salaries, although their situations differed depending on the family for whom they worked. Life in Windhoek is expensive and living in Katutura also means having to pay a lot of money for transport to work. Other expenses are related to housing (see Chapter 5), schooling and the fact that many of my informants were the only breadwinners

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21 Interview with Sofia, 33 years old, cleaner, 20.7.2000, original in English and Oshindonga.

of their family or had other relatives depending on them. With the small salaries they gained, it was hard to make ends meet.

In discussions with me, the cleaners at the MBEC often complained that although they had been employed by the government for many years, they had no prospect of promotion. Most of them, however, believed that it was their lack of formal qualifications and their limited proficiency in English that hindered them in finding a better job. During a discussion in class, Selma, one of the learners, said the following:

I am a government worker. I am sick of the low salary. I can't pay the school for my child. I want a certificate to get upgrade[22].

For women like Selma, joining the literacy class, was linked to their aspirations to become an office worker, i.e. a clerk, a receptionist or a typist:

I attend this literacy classes to get a certificate, and also I want to be promoted from cleaner to something else like clerk, and without education no better job or better salary[23].

Reema, another learner at the MBEC, had joined the class because of practical needs related to the search for a new job:

I want to look a job and know to fill my application form[24].

For those like Sofia, Selma, Reema and Irmela, who worked in the Ministry, their dreams were at once close and remote. Every day, they cleaned the offices of those women who were their role models and whose fate seemed to be so much better then their own: the secretaries, administrators and officers of the Ministry, representatives of the new black middle class who since independence have filled the ranks of the public

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[22] Classroom observation, MBEC, 10.7.2000

[23] Interview with Irmela, 26 years old, cleaner, 21.7.2000, interview translated from Oshikwanyama.

[24] Classroom observation, MBEC, 10.7.2000

service. Rockhill discovered similar dreams and aspirations among Spanish-speaking women who attended English literacy classes in Los Angeles:

> Women in the their late teens and early twenties and/or women who are living alone, have the desire to learn enough English to go to school and find office work. The dream is to be a secretary or a receptionist, but it is more than this – it is to enter the world of middle-class America, to wear dresses and high heels... (Rockhill 1993: 170).

Sofia's and Irmela's proximity with office work not only fuelled their dreams of a better job, it also made them painfully aware of their own low status in the new Namibia and the lack of opportunities they experienced. In interviews and conversations with me, they often expressed their frustrations in terms of being poor and uneducated. Education and, coupled with it, occupation is a strong marker of social hierarchies in the new Namibia. Since racial differences can no longer provide satisfying explanations for the existing inequalities, education is used by many to explain one's own misfortune and inferiority (see also Malan 1996b).

Whether education is the avenue to success, however, needs to be questioned. Given the high percentage of structural unemployment in the country, the highly unequal distribution of resources among the population and the limited possibilities of the economy, this has indeed to be doubted. Without doubt, the range of work options available to women like Albertine and Irmela is limited. Several of the cleaners in the MBEC acknowledged that it was not so easy to find a job, even with a degree.

Yes, in our country is also like this because some people have diplomas and certificates, but they don't have jobs. But you never give up, you never know when you will be lucky[25].

Despite their own doubts as to the 'truth' of the education discourse, my informants held on to it as a promise and something they yearned for. Similar

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[25] Interview with Aina, 42 years old, cleaner, 21.7.2000, interview translater from Oshikwanyama.

to the women in China's and Robin's study in a Cape Town squatter settlement, the cleaners and domestic workers who attended the literacy programme valued schooling and believed in qualifications as a requirement for employment (China and Robbins 1996).

For my informants, the literacy programme was not a 'decontextualised' activity that had little to do with their daily life. Even if what they learned during the lessons was not always directly connected with everyday life literacy practices, the classes helped them to learn English. As I will show in the coming chapters, in many contexts of daily life English was much needed. More importantly, for these learners the literacy class was associated with their aspirations for a better life that in their understanding required them to obtain formal qualifications. Time and again, in interviews and informal conversations, they told me about their hopes to find a better job, to make more money, or, as Aina put it, simply 'to become somebody'[26]. By making this connection, Irmela, Aina and the others understood literacy with reference to the outside world they lived in. While I am convinced that the 'utility' of learning was nevertheless important to these learners, I would claim, echoing Horsman's (1994) findings, that for the women in my study attending the literacy classes was not only a matter of learning functional skills.

The picture that emerges is that for the learners in the MBEC the class was much less disconnected from daily life than they first appeared to be. In a literal sense, it had become part of the cleaners' working day, as they met three times a week during working hours. Its more abstract signification, however, was its articulation with the cleaners' dream for a better life. Sitting in the class represented a step towards becoming an office worker. My informants enthusiastically embraced this new role. Their enthusiasm for their new role as 'learners' was a direct expression of the kinds of changing identities invoked by Rockhill (1993). Being a learner allowed Sofia, Irmela and Albertine to adopt a new and intrinsically positive image of themselves.

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[26] Aina, 21.7.2000. See also Rockhill 1987.

Joining the literacy classes for them was empowering, as it significantly enhanced their self-respect. This was so irrespectable of what they did or did not learn in the classes. Hertha, a cleaner at the state hospital in Katutura, put it this way:

I feel guilty because I dropped classes. Now I am proud again, because of the classes[27].

Christina, one of the learners in the MBEC, explained how she thought that as cleaners they were 'staying behind'. However, since she joined the literacy programme, she began to feel differently:

I am proud. It's not the same. It's a little better. I was very weak. But today, I can speak[28].

For the learners at the MBEC and for others, like Hertha, the literacy class became embedded in a discourse of work and of personal change through qualifications and professional education. What was happening during the lessons can be ascribed to the way adult learning in this context was mediated by the above discourses. The teaching was formal, the curriculum was modelled on the school syllabus, learners were given homework, they wrote exams and received certificates (for more details see Chapter 10).

Ideologically, the class at the MBEC was subsumed under a framework of further education, social mobility and self-improvement that had little to do with liberal adult education or traditions of community education in the 'Third World'. This was reinforced by the place and time of the lesson: the class met at the participants' workplace, in a room that used to be an office belonging to the Division of Adult Basic Education (the head office of the NLPN) and that was located next to the offices of the education specialists whose desks the learners normally cleaned.

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[27] Interview with Hertha, 48 years old, 21.7.2000, interview conducted partly in English, partly in Oshikwanyama.

I want to emphasise that the above orientation of the class not only happened with full consent of the learners, but was in part actively facilitated by them. Participants welcomed the relatively formal nature of the programme, as it matched their own beliefs about schooling, formal education and professional training. We can see here the central place education had in these learners' identities. In their view, a certain degree of formality and the 'right' structures gave status to their class and thereby reinforced their positive image of themselves as learners. Albertine for example told me that she was keen to write the end-of-year exams. *I like writing the exams*, she said[29].

Yet at the same time, becoming a learner in the NLPN, women like Irmela and Albertine also acknowledged what they regarded as their own deficits in terms of dominant literacies and formal qualifications. In that sense, the identity of a learner was not without its ambiguities. In particular, they recognised the limitations of their own literacies compared to English as the dominant literacy in work-related contexts. By doing so, they acknowledged the hardly to be denied power of English literacy in many institutional and economic contexts of post-independence Namibia. Whatever these learners' dreams might have been, like Magda, who had come to the classes because she wanted to become a secretary, they knew that in order to fulfil their aspirations, they needed to be proficient in English[30].

To conclude, the above discussion indicates some of the factors that contributed to the 'success' of the NLPN for this group of participants. Without doubt learners like Irmela and Albertine valued the kind of literacy they acquired through the programme. This was as much a recognition of the assumed role of formal education in the world of work as it was an expression

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[28] Interview with Christina, 49 years old, 20.7.2000, interview conducted partly in English, partly in Otjiherero.

[29] Interview with Albertine, 19.6.2000

[30] Interview with Madga, 27 years old, 12.7.2000, interview conducted in Khoekhoegowab.

of the cleaners' dream for a better and more fulfilling life. However, it was less school knowledge as such that mattered, but the certificate that was believed to serve as an entry pass to further education, professional training and eventually a new job. Whether this is a realistic project is, however, not entirely clear. The current policy of the NLPN foresees that graduates of the AUPE programme will be able to continue formal education through the evening classes of the Namibian College for Open Learning. When I left Namibia, the overall education and qualifications framework in place had not yet been developed enough to guarantee that this would be the case. Furthermore, the AUPE programme itself was still in the beginning of its implementation and there were as yet no graduates. As far as entry into the job market and vocational training is concerned, only time will tell what an AUPE end of programme certificate will be 'worth'.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the importance of certificates reflects the currency of a discourse of formal education that is widely shared. The point, however, is not whether any empirical evidence to verify the validity of its claims exists. If, as Foucault has demonstrated, the power of the discourse lies in its assumed 'truth', one needs to ask what makes people believe in its assertions. A possible explanation lies in the above discussed symbolic dimension of literacy. For many learners, literacy appeared to be connected with education, and the 'movement into a better, more powerful class and culture' (Rockhill 1993: 169). For these learners, literacy was rooted in the discourses of formal education and personal upliftment.

In Habermas' (1988) terms, we can interpret this as an example of how people's lifeworld can be colonised by discourses that emanate from the state and modern economic rationality. I use the concept of the lifeworld here to indicate a set of discourses that are similar to Gee's (1996) idea of the primary discourses of the family and community. These are associated with shared cultural knowledge, the web of social relationships which make up the community, and a set of identities that are carried forward within these networks (ibid.: 209-11). The practice of everyday life communication between

its members provides the basis on which lifeworld discourses are disseminated and reproduced. However, similar to the process Habermas (1988) has described, these lifeworld discourses do not exist in isolation, but constantly interact with and often are displaced by the discourses of the state and the broader economy. Accordingly, a clear separation between primary, or lifeworld, discourses and such secondary discourses (Gee 1996) is difficult to maintain.

Several factors contribute to the hegemony of discourses of formal education in contemporary Namibia. The government's policies on literacy and adult education actively promotes a view in which education fulfils its promise, as the way 'to a better future'[31]. In policy speeches and in the media, the idea of literacy as a prerequisite and a 'key' to vocational success and a better life is wide-spread. Inside the NLPN, the same discourse of salvation and individual advancement transpires through the textbooks and the programme's literacy songs (see Papen 2001 and Chapter 10 of this thesis). Historically, these discourses converge with many people's feelings of deprivation and discrimination that have their origin in the colonial and apartheid education systems. Differential access to education has been a strong marker of the inequalities black and coloured Namibians experienced. In many interviews and informal conversations, my informants spoke about their feelings of discrimination. One learner told me that they (meaning black Namibians) had been '*neglected*' and that they were '*isolated*'. *'This is the only chance we have'*, she added, referring to the literacy programme[32].

The significance of formal education and the cleaners' and domestic workers' aspirations to gain 'schooled literacy' (Cook-Gumpertz 1986; Street and Street 1991) becomes clearer when we take into account this historical

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31 'Literacy – Your key to a better future' is a prominent slogan of the NLPN. Among others, it was used for the celebrations of National Literacy Day in 1999 (see also Papen 2001).

32 Fieldnotes, Windhoek (Katutura), 11.6.2000.

legacy. As part of people's cultural knowledge, these feelings of deprivation open up the doors for formal education discourses to invade these learners' lifeworld. Their yearning for education needs to be understood in the broader context of increased social stratification and race/class relations in post-independence Namibia. The 'power' of specific literacy practices, as I have tried to show, can be explained within these parameters. However, it is only by taking into account how individual learners experience these broader forces that we can perhaps understand their willingness to embrace a discourse that in many ways disregards and oppresses their own competence and knowledge, including their often rich literacy practices.

In the view of the cleaners whom I met at the MBEC, the kind of office literacies they saw every day, were powerful because those who possessed and used them were the education officers, administrators and receptionists of the Ministry whose status and salary were far better than their own situation. Compared with these dominant literacies their own literacies, whatever power the outside literacy researcher might see in them, in Albertine's and Irmela's views were nothing but marginal. The inability to express herself fluently in English, despite her obvious command of the language, was seen by Albertine as a marker of her own low status.

The appearance of the new black middle class (cf. Bauer 1998) was made possible in part by the rapid and disproportionate expansion of the civil service in Namibia (Melber 2000). The employees of the MBEC whose offices Sofia and Irmela cleaned, are members of this new elite. Crucially and as Sofia and the others were well aware, these government employees have been recruited from the group of those Namibians who either prior to independence (and often through their status as exiled SWAPO members) or in the years since 1990 passed secondary or tertiary education and acquired professional qualifications.

Eleven years after attaining independence, discrepancies in income and opportunities remain exceptionally high. This is so despite the Namibian government's attempts to develop the economy and to broaden opportunities

and an impressively high public investment in education[33]. A commonly used indicator of such differences is the Gini-coefficient that measures the disparities in the income of groups of the population in relation to the average per capita income (Schade 2000). According to figures published by the Central Statistics Office, in 1996 the Gini-coefficient for Namibia was 0.701 (ibid.). This is the highest Gini-coefficient in the world, indicating as Schade comments a 'highly unequal and skewed income distribution'.

A feeling of this inequality undoubtedly transpires through the learners' voices quoted earlier in this section. Irmela, Albertine, Sofia and Magda struggled to accept their own marginal position in view of a black middle-class, a new 'elite' (Tapscott, quoted in Bauer 1998: 131), of which quite obviously they, as so many others, were not part. In this context, the discourse of literacy and formal education logically functioned to help them to come to terms with their own subordinate position. Quite fittingly, the NLPN promises its learners that literacy will allow them to find their 'key to a better future'. The discourse offers the recipe for their potential escape. Given this background and the historical role of education, the power of literacy as lived in learners' subjectivities becomes less surprising.

In this chapter, I discussed literacy in relation to the workplace. I argued that for the learners at the Ministry and for some of the domestic workers who attended literacy classes in Katutura, discourses about literacy were tied up with discourses of formal qualifications and certificates that carried with them the promise of better jobs and better lives. In the following chapter, I begin to look at literacy practices of everyday life as they were embedded in institutions and practices of daily life in Katutura and Windhoek. As before, I

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[33] In the fiscal year 1993/94, the education sector received a share of 24.4% of the total budget (Schade 2000).

attempt to include in this discussion the wider sets of both institutional and lifeworld discourses and their relationship to identity.

5. BANKS, LOANS AND INVOICES: BUREAUCRATIC LITERACY PRACTICES

1. Introduction: Foucault, literacy and bureaucratic power

Like most citizens of modern states, the people of Katutura are involved in a wide range of bureaucratic and institutional practices. These are part of contemporary city life and involve residents in the structures and regularities of local and national governmental institutions and private businesses. To a considerable degree, communication between the people and these often 'faceless' institutions (Giddens 1992) is mediated via written texts, i.e. forms, leaflets, letters, posters and circulars.

Bureaucratisation and along with it the institutionalisation of social relationships is reflected in the increased textualisation of people's day-to-day encounters with the state and with other institutions of modern social life. Increasingly, as a result, local practices and people's lifeworlds are shaped and regulated by disembedded institutions and their discourses (cf. Jones 2000a).

In order to understand the forms of power that characterise the functioning of bureaucratic and financial institutions and the role of literacy practices in extending and implementing bureaucratic authority, I draw on Foucault's conceptualisation of power. However, Foucault's ideas on power are complex and not always consistent. Cheater (1999) suggests it might be for this reason that many anthropologists, who apply Foucault's ideas, have avoided a comprehensive discussion of his definition of power. There are undoubtedly aspects in Foucault's work that I either do not comprehend or to which I do

not subscribe. However, this does not prevent me from adopting ideas from his work that I consider insightful and useful.

The first element I found useful is Foucault's emphasis on the micro-functioning of power relations (Gore 1998) or, what he himself called 'the microphysics of power' or even simpler 'micropower' (Foucault, in Rabinow 1984: 174). In 'Discipline and Punish' (1977), Foucault explains that the form of 'disciplinary power' that emerged with the development of modern societies and institutions extended power relations beyond the grand antagonism between the individual and the state into all spheres and down to all levels of daily life. Accordingly, he suggests that we need to look at power not only as vested in the sovereign authority of a king, a dictator or the ruling classes, imposed on the dominated masses. Power, he insists, is a much more complex phenomenon than what transpires through such dualistic views. It exists through a range of specific mechanisms and technologies that go 'right down into the depths of society' (Foucault, in Rabinow 1984: 174). The state, he argues

> is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth (Foucault 1980: 122).

But, he adds

> this meta-power with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power (ibid.: 122).

Therefore, 'micropowers' are always linked to broader forces of authority and domination.

Secondly, it is important to add that Foucault understood these micro-powers to be realised in and through the individual. Thus power is not external, but is articulated through human individuals who 'undergo' and 'exercise' power 'simultaneously' (Foucault 1980: 98). Hence, Foucault understands power to be closely related to identity. Finally, power is relational,

i.e. it is 'inhering in the multiple and complex relations between all individuals, groups, institutions and even spaces in a given society' (Paechter 2001: 3).

I found Foucault's concept of power as existing in the manifold relations of everyday life particularly helpful as it invited me to look for power in the micro-contexts of my informants' lives and the specific literacy practices they engaged with. Methodologically, this perspective required that I ground my analysis in the ethnography of literacy events. The way I look at these literacy events is as embedded in localised and individualised instances of power relations that are realised in specific uses and meanings of reading and writing. In other words, I aimed to find out how individuals, groups and institutions 'exercise and maintain power through literacy practices' (Street 2001c: 298).

Following Foucault's claim that micro-powers are inextricably linked to the broad instances of power and domination, an essential part of my analytical work was to uncover how localised power events are intersected with non-local societal, political and economic forces. Reinhold (quoted in Shore and Wright 1995: 14) calls this method 'studying through': tracing the interaction between discourses, actors and structures at different levels.

The third aspect that informed my analysis of literacy is Foucault's argument against power as being solely repressive. He believed that power is both repressive and productive and contains the capacity for resistance and change (Foucault 1977, 1980). If power circulates both in external relations of authority and through individuals and their actions, it is integral to the creation of our own subjectivities (Rockhill 1993). Power, then, is constitutive of identity, through outside forces of domination, as well as through processes of identification by which the individual through a form of self-transformation engages with and seizes power (cf. Foucault 1988b). Power positions people and often they align themselves with powerful discourses. But at the same time power provides opportunities for appropriation and dissent. In this sense, power can be seen to be constitutive of the individual through processes of

self-recognition and self-transformation within social and discursive environments.

In order to explain how I understand the relationship between power, discourse and identity, I will briefly go back to Sofia, Albertine and the other learners whom I introduced in the previous chapter. As I have tried to explain then, external relations of power manifested themselves in the material conditions that constrained their lives. These essentially set limits to Sofia's and Albertine's 'capacity for self-creation' (Schaamsma 1998: 257) which resulted for them in a lack of opportunity that was not limited to material conditions alone.

But how Sofia and Albertine assessed their own situation, how they perceived its limitations and opportunities is part of how they constructed themselves as subjects within this environment. This testifies to their own agency. At the same time, we can see here the productive effect of a discourse on individual identities. How Sofia, Albertine, Irmela and the others thought about themselves and their position in society indicates the influence the dominant discourses of literacy and education had on their identities. These discourses provided Sofia and Albertine with a way to conduct themselves that made their position explainable, whilst including not only a possible escape, but also an immediate reward: their new roles as learners. It is in this sense that discourses 'act(ed) on and through' (Shore and Wright 1995: 6) the cleaners' subjectivities. What drew them towards the literacy classes, was their belief in literacy as an instrument to change their lives. For these cleaners, literacy was powerful in the form of a discourse of education, individual upliftment and social mobility.

In light of the above introductory explorations of power in relation to literacy and discourse, it seems adequate to reiterate how, in this thesis, I use the concept of discourse. Let me put it in the following way: I encountered discourses in two forms. Theoretically, I approached them from two angles. First, I studied discourses in their abstract form, i.e. as clusters of meaning and ideology. It is in this sense that in Chapter 2 I spoke of discourses of

literacy. Secondly, then, I looked at specific communicative events as the individual and instantaneous realisations of such discourses. These communicative events are the points at which 'abstract' discourses are realised or enacted in specific statements or utterances and their associated practices. In that sense, I understand a communicative event (or a literacy event, to use the narrower concept) to be always a discursive event: an event in which meaning is realised discursively. Yet each communicative event is always an instance of appropriation and an opportunity for re-negotiation of discourses. What I mean here is that the specific meaning or the ideological content of a discourse is only decided in the moment of its realisation. And this always entails an opportunity for dissent from hegemonic positions.

The above position is important because it explains why I see the learners with whom I worked not as passive recipients, but as active agents who seized the opportunity for engagement with hegemonic practices and discourses. This is what I want to call appropriation, a process that can include alignment with, but also re-negotiation of and opposition to an earlier, and often dominant, meaning. If we look at how my informants engaged with dominant discourses in this way, we can no longer regard their actions as mere subordination, passive acceptance, or unfiltered internalisation. Rather, we must see them as the outcome of a process of negotiation and as evidence of people's agency.

In the following sections, I present examples of bureaucratic literacy practices as I observed them in Namibia. They exemplify the power of modern institutional processes and the role of texts in enforcing bureaucratic authority. My focus in this discussion will be on how local people react to and engage with these hegemonic practices. By doing so, I look at processes of alignment and appropriation as defined above.

2. Bureaucratic literacy practices: the role of literacy mediators

Finding one's way through the institutional jungle of local and national bureaucracies, as Malan (1996b) has described, and tackling the literacies of commerce (that I will discuss in Chapter 6), requires the newcomer to get to grips with the forms of written and oral communication these practices make use of. In the case of Namibia, this includes having to cope with a language that for the majority of people is not their first language. For many it is not even a language they have had much opportunity to learn. Public institutions in Namibia work in English. The same language is used for written communication by most private companies and in the financial sector. Even in the post office, an institution that is closer to the people than the high street banks of Windhoek city, one is compelled to read and write in English.

Given the above, it is not surprising that Namibians, as people all over the world, rely for many of their bureaucratic literacy activities on the help of experts. In her study of literacy practices in Bellville South, a coloured community in South Africa, Malan describes the role of officials, as the 'literacy experts' of their institutions (Malan 1996b: 6-12). As they mediate between the abstract structures and rules of bureaucracies and the people they serve, they do the 'facework commitment' (Giddens 1992).

... when I deposit money the staff members help me fill in the form[1].

In Katutura and in Windhoek, there are many such literacy mediators and most of the learners, like Albertine, made regular use of their help. The customer service advisors in the bank, who help clients to complete their deposit slips, in fact, fulfil a far greater task than just assisting them with reading and writing. They mediate between the customer's home language, the language they and the customer use in their oral communication (which may be a different language than the client's home language), and the

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[1] Albertine, Windhoek (Katutura), 19.7.2000, interview conducted in English and Afrikaans.

language of the form, English. Furthermore, they mediate between different modes (Baynham 1995) and help to re-contextualise the contained information into a different register (Baynham 1993; Baynham and Masing 2000). Finally, mediators are brokers or translators between different discourses, the client's home discourses of money and the bank's rules and terms (cf. Robins 1996). Therefore, they fulfil the role of literacy and discourse mediators.

Malan (1996a and b) describes the literacy practices involved in applying for and receiving pensions. She portrays pension day as a specific literacy event and shows how texts and signs structure the participation of agents and clients in this event. She has, however, not scrutinised the messages and discourses residing in these texts. Malan comes to the conclusion that in most dealings with local offices and institutions, including banks, clients have very little reading and writing to do. As long as the pensioners know the right procedures, they can get through the process with a minimal amount of reading and writing (Malan 1996b). The writing is done by the employees of the pension office. Using a term coined by Schiffrin, Malan calls this form of literacy mediation 'writing (speaking) for another' (Malan 1996a: 8). 'Writing for another' is also a frequent practice in Katutura and it is particularly common in encounters with state officials or other 'experts' and professionals.

Housing issues in Katutura are a good example with which to illustrate the process of 'writing for another'. Since independence, the Namibian government has encouraged private home ownership. A number of public and private credit schemes are available to help families on low incomes to acquire land, build a house or extend their old homes. Many learners and teachers with whom I worked, had received a loan through one of these schemes. Howing, at the time of my fieldwork, none of my informants was going through the process of applying for a loan. Accordingly, what I can say here about the application procedures is based on information provided by learners who retold their experiences. I also interviewed officers at the

Municipality and the Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing (MLRGH).

Potential buyers first apply for a loan that allows them to acquire a plot. This is done either through the Windhoek Municipality or the MLGRH. Usually, these loans have to be paid back over a period of eight years. The interest rate is calculated according to the specific and favourable conditions set up by the government. The next step then is to get another loan for the building of the house. This has to be paid back over 20 years. Applicants can be granted the loan for the plot and for the house at the same time, so that they can begin to build the house as soon as they have received a plot.

In order to get a loan from the MLRGH, the applicant visits the respective officers in the Ministry. Here, the housing officer explains the procedure and takes the applicant through the forms (see next page *Figure 5.1*). However, as I was told by the officers in charge, in most cases, they do not fill in the form immediately, but send the applicant back home with an empty form[2]. The idea is that s/he should first consult friends and relatives who can explain the words on the form and the procedures involved. In a sense, the officers here refer the applicant to a kind of second mediator, someone who is close to the person and may know the procedures from own experience. On the second visit to the Ministry, the form is filled out. Again, I was told, this is normally done by the officers themselves. This is a typical example of 'writing for another', similar to the scene at the Magistrate's office in Fort Beaufort that Malan describes (1996a: 8-9). The officer asks the client a question, s/he answers and s/he then writes the appropriate answer in the form. Once the loan has been granted, recipients receive monthly letters regarding the payments to be made. In the above situation, the person in charge of the writing presumably has more control over the situation than the applicant who provides answers in oral form. As the mediators of the dominant literacy

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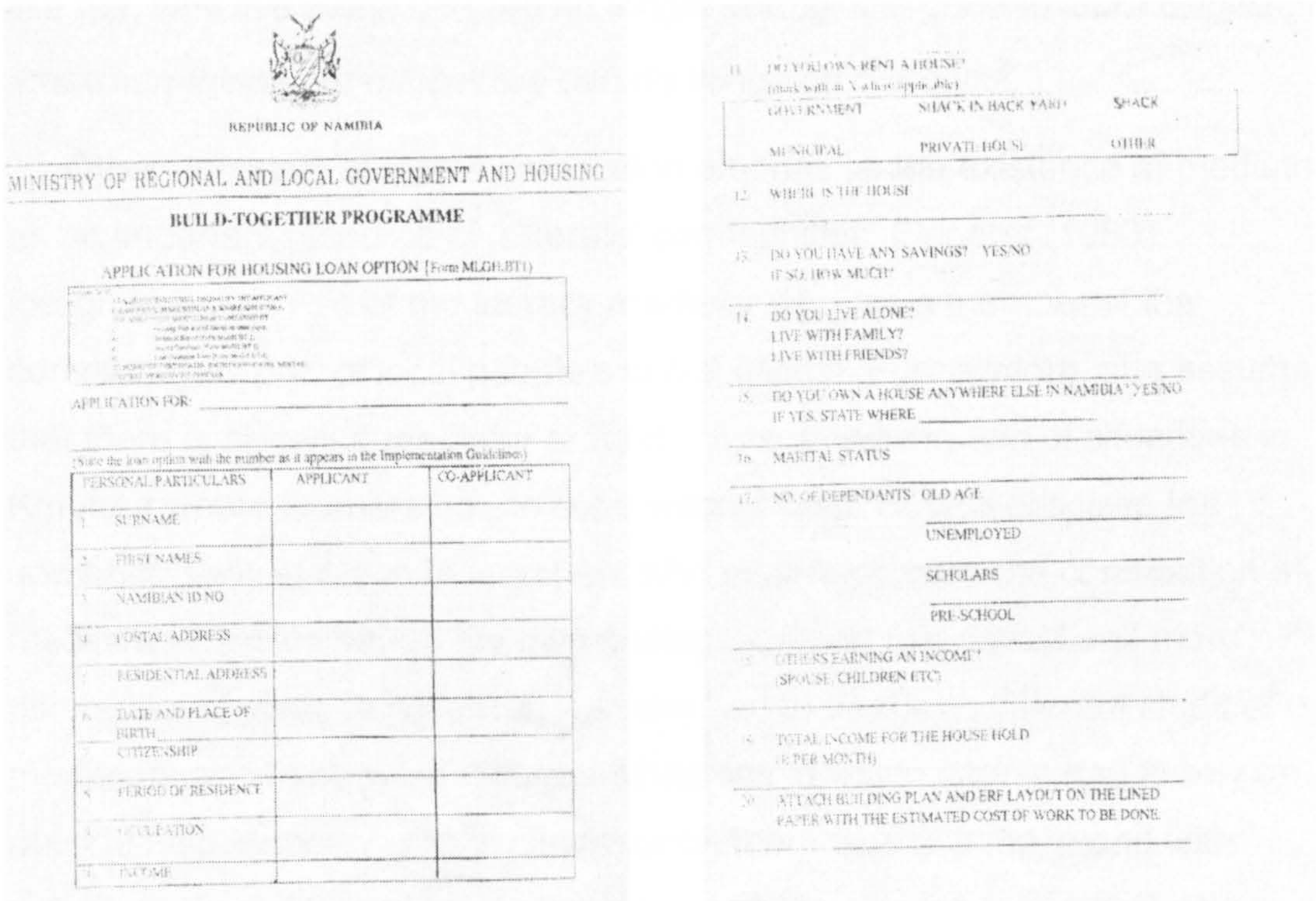
[2] Interview with H. Eisab, Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing, Windhoek 27.8.2000.

practices of the MLGRH and the rules and structures these are part of, the officers and their form dictate what kind of information is needed and how this has to be presented.



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING

BUILD-TOGETHER PROGRAMME

APPLICATION FOR HOUSING LOAN OPTION [Form MLGH.BT1]

APPLICATION FOR: _____

(State the loan option with the number as it appears in the Implementation Guidelines)

PERSONAL PARTICULARS	APPLICANT	CO-APPLICANT
1. SURNAME		
2. FIRST NAMES		
3. NAMIBIAN ID NO		
4. POSTAL ADDRESS		
5. RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS		
6. DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH		
7. CITIZENSHIP		
8. PERIOD OF RESIDENCE		
9. OCCUPATION		
10. INCOME		

11. DO YOU OWN/RENT A HOUSE?
(Mark with an 'X' where applicable)

GOVERNMENT	SHACK IN BACK YARD	SHACK
MUNICIPAL	PRIVATE HOUSE	OTHER

12. WHERE IS THE HOUSE

13. DO YOU HAVE ANY SAVINGS? YES/NO
IF SO, HOW MUCH?

14. DO YOU LIVE ALONE?
LIVE WITH FAMILY?
LIVE WITH FRIENDS?

15. DO YOU OWN A HOUSE ANYWHERE ELSE IN NAMIBIA? YES/NO
IF YES, STATE WHERE _____

16. MARITAL STATUS

17. NO. OF DEPENDANTS OLD AGE

UNEMPLOYED

SCHOLARS

PRE-SCHOOL

18. OTHERS EARNING AN INCOME?
(SPOUSE, CHILDREN ETC)

19. TOTAL INCOME FOR THE HOUSE HOLD
(E PER MONTH)

20. ATTACH BUILDING PLAN AND ERF LAYOUT ON THE LINED PAPER WITH THE ESTIMATED COST OF WORK TO BE DONE.

Figure 5.1: Pages 1 and 2 of the application form for a loan from the MLRGH

In this example, formal bureaucratic literacies are an intrinsic part of a system that relates the citizen, as recipients of a loan, to the state. The role of the literacy mediator is associated with the distance that separates the applicants from the institution of the Ministry. Mediation here is part of an asymmetrical relationship between the Ministry, as the authority that grants a loan, and the ordinary citizens of Katutura who apply for financial support (cf. Fingeret 1983).

In discussions with learners, I asked them how they felt about relying on literacy mediators. The answers varied. Many said they trust the people in the bank, at the Ministry or at the post office. But several of the women I interviewed resented the fact that in many situations they could not talk or write for themselves. They wanted to be independent and to be able to do

things on their own. Carolina, a learner in a literacy class in Katutura, lived on her own and often asked people for help with forms and other bureaucratic documents. Talking about the literacy classes, she said to me that for people like her, who live alone and are no longer young, *it is good to learn English, so that when things get difficult we can do things on our own*[3].

Other accounts of literacy mediation emphasise the existence of mediators as an important resource of 'illiterate' communities. Fingeret (1983) foregrounds the role of the literacy mediator who, as a member of the community, is part of local people's social capital. Furthermore, she assumes that there is always a mediator around. I was, however, told of situations in Katutura where learners had to cope without help. Robins criticises the 'romantic' view of some researchers who overemphasise the contribution of mediators (Robins 1996). My own findings support this critical and more differentiated view. In Katutura, learners had to deal with different kinds of mediators and there were different situations in which people had to rely on outside help. According to my informants, there was nothing wrong with asking one's children to take care of the arriving bills (cf. Kell 1994). But in other situations, they had to face high-level mediators (Malan 1996b), officials or doctors whose authority was articulated through the languages and literacies they commanded. Elizabeth, one of Carolina's fellow students, had to go to hospital regularly in order to have her blood pressure checked. But she resented the fact that she could not talk to the doctor directly, as he only spoke English[4]. My informants' desire to talk and write for themselves reflects their realisation that in many literacy events they were a partial actor only whose capacity to influence and control the exchange of information was limited.

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[3] Interview with Carolina, 54 years old, 21.6.2000, interview translated from Khowkhoegowab.

[4] Interview with Elizabeth, 56 years old, 18.7.2000, interview translated from Khoekhoegowab.

These examples reveal how important it is for the researcher to attend to the power relations inherent in each literacy event. I take it from my informants' views that they were well aware of the bureaucratic authority of forms and the power of English as the official medium of communication in institutional contexts. At the same time, the above examples illustrate the central role of literacy mediation as a strategy used by ordinary Namibians to access and engage with institutional literacy practices.

3. Loan agreements as an example of the dominant literacy practices of the state

In the above case of the housing loan, the text itself, is of tremendous importance to people's life. The contract, called 'Memorandum of agreement', is the visible proof of the agreement made. It stipulates both creditor's and debtor's rights and duties. Here, literacy serves as evidence (Barton and Hamilton 1998). Furthermore, the signed agreement between the Ministry and the receiver of the loan sets out a range of rules and expected roles according to which debtors have to behave. In a figurative sense, the contract is an embodiment of the Ministry, as the institution, its rules and discourses and its relationship with the Namibian people.

Bureaucratic literacy practices reflect the authoritarian structure of many public services, something that is of course not specific to Namibia alone. Such literacy practices serve to regulate communication between the state, as the authority behind the institution, and its citizens (cf. Fawns and Ivanic 2001). More importantly, as policies, they specify rules and the technologies that implement them, which are decided by the state, often against the citizens' own priorities.

On the other hand, loans, subsidies and other provisions, such as pensions and disability allowances, are part of the Namibian government's attempts to redress the inequalities of the former system. These measures are intended to promote equality and to foster reconciliation and nation-

building. As policies, they aim to incorporate the previously disadvantaged and alienated black and coloured Namibians into the new independent nation state. Yet as these discourses are becoming powerful, they seek to subsume people's own aspirations and expectations under the government's modernist approach to development. Its discourse of citizenship presumes the state and its citizens to be mutually responsible for such basic requirements as housing. Housing loans are embedded in these discourses. What we have here is an example of how literacy is linked to the state and its power to foster particular policies and development strategies from above. Furthermore, we can see how the government's housing policy, implemented through its loan programme, presumes and promotes specific social identities.

Housing policies in Namibia and their related institutional practices are evidence of processes of normalisation and technologisation. Social issues, such as the lack of affordable housing in Windhoek, and the complexity of individual situations are translated into a discourse of instrumental rationality that makes quantification, planning and management possible. In this context, specific literacy practices, such as housing policy documents or loan contracts, become part of a process whereby social and political issues are transformed into technical problems and planable solutions[5]. Expert and scientific discourses, presented as their 'truth' outcomes (cf. Foucault 1972) are the basis on which interventions are constructed. In that way, what are intrinsically political decisions are masked under the guise of instrumentality and neutrality. Ordinary people's reactions to such policies and practices, by contrast, can easily be disqualified as 'irrational' (Werbner 1999). As a result, the underlying issues are closed off from further debate and there is little space for contestation by those who are the 'targets' of these policies.

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[5] For a further discussion of these issues regarding housing policies in South Africa, which shares many of Namibia's housing problems, see Spiegel, Watson and Wilkinson (1999). In their paper, the authors address in particular the question of appropriate research strategies to inform housing policies.

To summarise, the recasting of political decisions into objective, rational or bureaucratic procedures, of which the application forms for the housing loan are an example, has normalising effects (Foucault 1977). Such processes serve to make policies sound necessary and acceptable and to constrain citizens into the role of applicant and debtor and commit them to monthly repayments. Literacy is an important instrument in these processes.

In Katutura; I discovered few traces of oppositional discourses that revealed a fundamental critique of the current government's policies. Most of my informants expressed their general agreement with the state's efforts to rebuild the nation. Nevertheless, the discourses of the current government did not remain uncontested. Some people questioned the government's housing policy on the basis that they felt entitled to receive free or affordable housing. Such discourses of entitlement (Kell 1995) stood in opposition to the government's discourses of development and citizenship. Although literacy and discourse mediation is likely to take place, this does not automatically guarantee that the bridge between bureaucratic language, institutional rules, state policy and people's lifeworld discourses can be overcome. Undoubtedly, for my informants the loan agreement, despite its enabling capacity, remained an intrinsic part of a web of state policies that attempted to plan and institutionalise development processes in Namibia according to official policy priorities. Power, in this context, was felt both positively and negatively, an issue to which I will return in the next chapter. Whenever I discussed housing loans with my informants, they made it clear that they were grateful for owning their houses. But they felt the repayments to be a huge burden on their meagre monthly incomes.

Bureaucracies, as Jones (2000b) notes, have always served as forms not only of administration, but of control. As the above discussion shows, to a considerable extent they achieve this by relying on specific literacy and discourse practices. Administrative forms, such as loan contracts, categorise and store personal data. If a legal or administrative conflict arises, these

documents provide the basis on which actions against the debtor can be instigated.

How my informants in Katutura experienced modern institutional and state literacy practices, then, may not be totally different from how citizens in other countries are subjected to processes of bureaucratisation. Jones' example of Welsh farmers and European Union regulations is a good case in point (ibid.). Her case shares another important condition with Namibia: the law stipulates that all official documents have to be written in English which may not be the first language of the Welsh farmers. In Namibia, the use of English in all instances that relate to the state and to local and regional government institutions, confirms the role of the official language as a dominant literacy. What is significant however, is the distance between the spoken everyday English, which is increasingly familiar to many Namibians, and the bureaucratic English of the state and commerce. Both the power of the written variety that comes with institutionalisation and the specific genre required, are important forces that establish and confirm bureaucratic authority in Namibia.

4. Banking

U: When you go to the bank, what language do you have to speak?

J: I usually use the card. I don't have to talk.

U: But sometimes you have to see the people in the bank?

J: Yes...

U: And do you sometimes at the bank have a form that you have to fill out?

J: Yes.

U: And in what language is this form?

J: It is in English.

U: But you know how you have to fill in the form?

J: No, sometimes.

U: What do you do then?

J: I ask help from the staff[6].

Most people I met in Katutura had a bank account or a savings account at the post office. Several learners had two accounts, a savings and a current account. However, some of the married women did not have their own account.

Many learners asked their children and grandchildren to help them with their bank affairs. They explained and translated letters and went to the bank when their parents needed to withdraw or deposit money. But not all the learners could rely on their children as mediators. Emma, Justus and Carolina had to go to the bank themselves. Justus' children were grown up and no longer stayed with him. Emma's children attended a boarding school outside Windhoek and only visited their mother during their holidays. Carolina lived on her own. When Emma, Carolina or Justus had difficulties with the forms, they asked the bank staff to help them.

As in my earlier example of a housing loan, the texts involved in the social practices of banking are tremendously important. The forms, slips, cards, signs and letters are central to any communication and transaction that takes place (see next page *Figure 5.2*). They are the visible evidence of the transactions made, be it setting up a bank account, withdrawing money or paying bills by direct debit. Deposit slips are signifiers of possessions, i.e. the amounts of money clients entrust to the bank.

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[6] Interview with Justus, 67 years old, Windhoek (Katutura), 20.6.2000, translated from Khoekhoegowab.

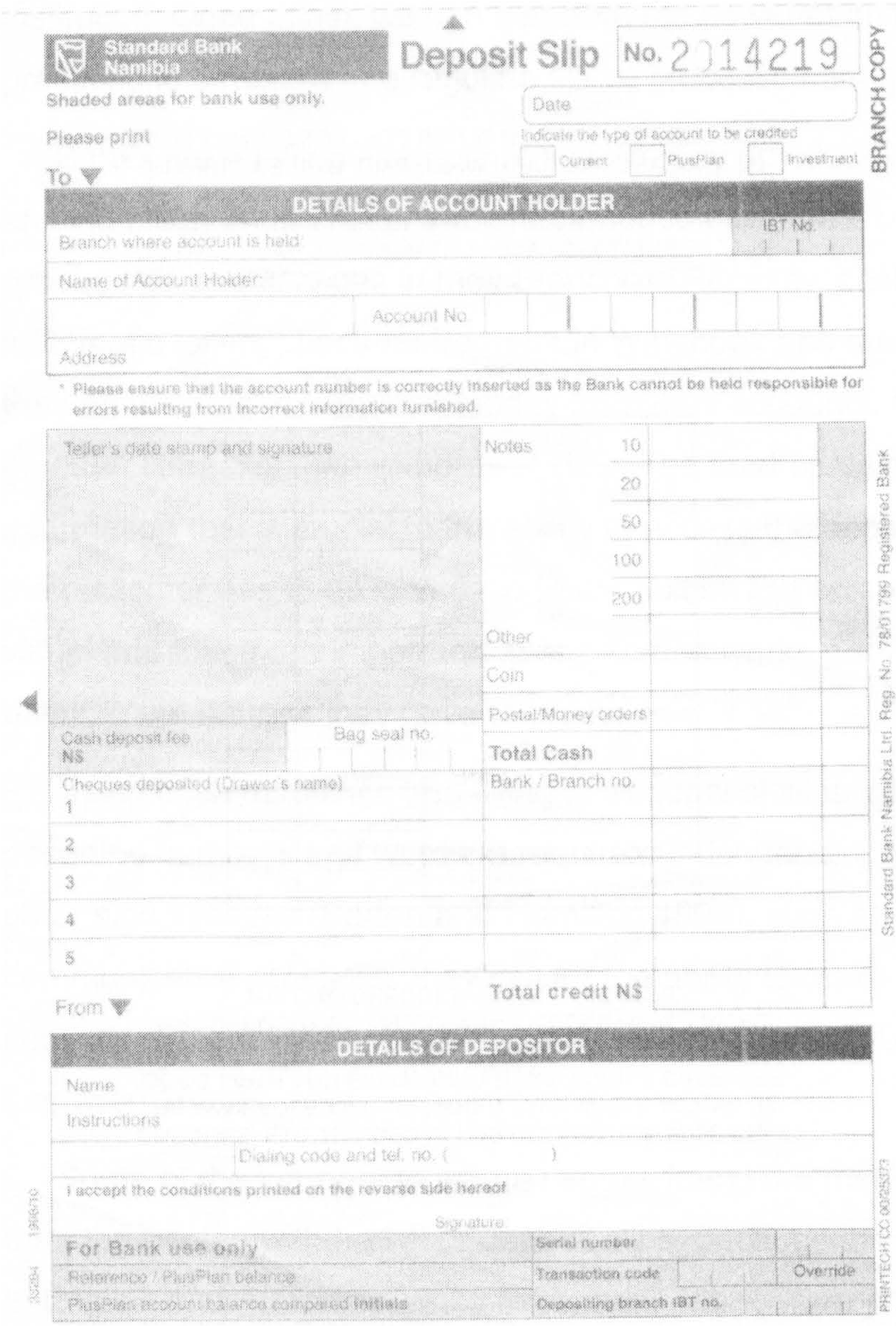

Figure 5.2: Deposit slip of a Namibian bank

When visiting a bank in Windhoek, the customer finds herself surrounded by signs, posters and markings. These spatial arrangements make use of literacy to divide the room into different sections, services and queues. These physical spaces are at the same time socially divided places that separate between different services and different types of customers, e.g. business and private clients. As literacy practices, these signs and divisions serve to structure and order the processes of banking according to the logic of the

institution. Once again, we can see here the power of institutional literacy practices to structure and regulate social processes and people's behaviour.

Banks are a telling example of how literacy practices can change (Barton and Hamilton 2000). A bank might introduce new forms or rearrange the procedures and services in their branches. Recently, cash machines, called 'automatic tellers', became frequent in Windhoek and many learners used their bank cards to withdraw money from their accounts. Cash machines rely on other literacies than withdrawal slips. The card contains encoded information that is crucial to the ability to access the account. The main thing the customer has to do is to decode the text on the screen. The role of the visual and touch are important, as the screen works with arrows to direct users to the buttons they have to press.

Using cash machines and filling in withdrawal slips involves more than decoding numbers and words. It requires understanding layout, design and other sign systems (Barton and Hamilton 1998), such as arrows. As communicative practices, they call for the ability to make sense out of different semiotic systems rather than linguistic ability alone (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 1996).

Some of the learners to whom I spoke found the machines easier to use than the printed withdrawal or deposit slips, because the machines operated in English and Afrikaans, while many bank forms were printed in English only. Another learner, Irmela, who did not speak Afrikaans, used to ask the security guards, who often patrol the area around the cash machines, when she needed help[7]. These examples show how learners like Irmela took hold of new literacy practices by engaging the support of a mediator. Others, like Justus, recognised the advantage of the cash machines which allowed them

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[7] Interview with Irmela, 21.7.2000

to make use of 'old' skills, i.e. their Afrikaans, in order to access 'new' literacies[8].

5. Invoices

Invoices are part of people's daily literacy realities. When I asked my informants whether they received any letters, the first thing all of them mentioned were invoices and payment reminders. Apart from the invoices received from shops, that I will discuss in the next chapter, the most frequently mentioned bills were from the Windhoek Municipality. Residents of Katutura receive invoices for water, sewage and electricity. Those who have a telephone, receive bills from Telecom.

Invoices are a typical icon of bureaucratic literacy practices. I have given them a prominent place in my analysis, because of their sheer quantity and the importance they had for my informants. However, because I had limited access to my informants' homes, I was not able to observe how they delt with invoices in the family. Again, my information relies on people's accounts of their experiences with invoices.

The way I look at the invoices and the activity of reading them is as a social practice (cf. Barton and Hall 1999). As a genre, bills belong to a group of official letters that have their own textual and semiotic features. They are part of a hierarchical relationship between sender and recipient.

On the next page is an example of a letter from the Municipality to Ana, a 45-year-old domestic worker from Katutura (see next page *Figure 5.3*).

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[8] Interview with Justus, 20.6.2000

CITY OF WINDHOEK

STATEMENT FOR :

Erf	3281 KAT
Street	16 TESTA MENT ST
Building	D50/16 KAT CENTRAL

A KAJU
P O BOX 1800
WINDHOEK

KAT3281
PW1

Client No
WHK00209929
Date of Statement
17/07/2000
Last Day for Payment
15/08/2000

City of Windhoek

PO Box 59
Windhoek
Namibia

PLEASE SEE NOTES ON REVERSE

Electricity Deposit	Water Deposit	Bank Guarantee
N$ 60.00	N$ 0.00	N$ 0.00

Balance brought forward	778.37
RECEIPT mmn3377 ON 03/07/2000	200.00-
EB10: ELEC BASIC for HOUSE, 15/06/2000->17/07/2000 15Ampere, Inst No: 28328	44.70
EC10: REVERSAL of previous ELC ESTIMATED consumption for meter: 32487	44.15-
EC10: ELEC CONSUMP: 16/05/2000->30/06/2000,Meter no:32487 Reading:25452 -> 25900 = 448 kWh @ N$.165	73.92
ELECTRICITY LATE FEE: N$10	10.00
WB10: WATER BASIC for HOUSE, 15/06/2000->17/07/2000 15mm @ meter inlet: Inst No: 162783	17.50
WC10: REVERSAL of previous WTR ESTIMATED consumption for meter: 00690	2.94-
WC10: WTR CONSUMP: 16/05/2000->30/06/2000 = 46 days, Meter no:00690 Reading:1372 -> 1378 = 6kl, average = 0.13kl/day; 6kl @ N$2.92; less allowance(included in basic charge) = N$21.87	0.00
WATER LATE FEE: N$5	5.00
RW02: ASSESSMENT RATE ON IMPROVEMENT VALUE OF N$ 25400 for 17/07/2000 - 15/08/2000 @ .047c per N$ per month	11.94
RW01: ASSESSMENT RATE ON SITE VALUE OF N$ 10000 for 17/07/2000 - 15/08/2000 @ .181c per N$ per month	18.46
INTEREST: 20% BETWEEN 15/06/2000 - 03/07/2000 ON .26423013?8	0.26
RATES ARREARS = N$39.97, INTEREST = 20 % per year; 15/06/2000 - 17/07/2000	0.53
RS01: REFUSE REMOVAL 17/07/2000 to 15/08/2000 - 1 x bin(s) 1 X WEEKLY @ N$51.85 per bin per month.	51.85
SE01: SEWERAGE 17/07/2000 - 15/08/2000: residential erf 256m2 = 12.5m3 design flow @ N$2.9325/m3 per month	35.41
RT30: RENTAL: KATUTURA HOUSES, 01/08/2000 - 31/08/2000	22.53

PLEASE PAY THE ARREARS BY THE END OF THIS MONTH TO AVOID THE SUSPENSION OF THE ELECTRICITY AND WATER SUPPLY AND/OR THE TAKING OF LEGAL STEPS.
IF YOU ARE NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH THIS ACCOUNT, PLEASE COMMUNICATE WITH OUR AUDITORS AT FAX (061) 227879 OR PO BOX 2558, WINDHOEK. APOLOGY! THE ALOE WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED THIS MONTH

90+Days	60 Days	30 Days	Current	Total Due	
23.79	298.16	209.33	292.23	N$	823.51

★★★★★★★★★★★★

Tel: Work: 263412 | Home:

Client No	
WHK00209929	A KAJU P O BOX 1800 WINDHOEK

Date of Statement	17/07/2000
Total Due	N$ 823.51
Amount Paid	N$

PLEASE RETURN THIS SECTION WITH YOUR PAYMENT

Figure 5.3: Ana's invoice

The invoice is divided into different sections. Various colours, boxes and frames are used to demarcate its parts. However, it is not immediately obvious how the different sections relate to each other. In fact, some parts of the bill, for example the last sentence of the text in capital letters below the list of expenses, are completely unrelated to the rest. The 'Aloe' is a municipal newsletter. Other parts of the information are presented in encoded form, for example on the list of rates incurred during the current month.

The most complicated part of the invoice appears to be the list of expenses incurred. These relate to a range of different services and include additional expenses such as late payment fees. Also taken into account are previous payments for electricity and water which had been made on the basis of an estimated consumption level. Furthermore, the invoice includes payments Ana has to make for 'improvements' on her property, that were carried out by the Municipality, and for which she had received credit. She now has to pay back the respective sums, with added interest. Such improvements relate to land development, in Ana's case presumably water, sewage and electric installations[9].

As a numeracy practice (Baker and Street 1996), the letter contains a long list of additions and subtractions. In the left column the fees and services on the basis of which the amounts stated on the right side have been calculated are given. But the underlying multiplications are quite complex. Calculating the amount Ana owes thus becomes a complicated piece of bureaucratic mathematics. What remains hidden behind the figures are the prices for water and other amenities that are set by the Municipality and over which the recipient of the invoice has no influence.

When Ana received the letter, she had already accrued considerable arrears on her payments. The sentence below the statement reminds her to pay the outstanding amount. Despite its polite tone, it is an obvious command.

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9 For more information on housing development in Windhoek see Seckelmann (1997).

It is a depersonalised order that is legitimised and 'empowered' by its written nature and institutional backing (Iedema 1997). The frequency of passives and the use of the imperative mood contribute to the letter's impersonal and authoritarian style (Fairclough 1995). 'Please pay' is not a direct obligational modality, but has to be understood as such. The use of the passive form, as in 'Late fees and/or interest to be charged if full settlement is not received by last day of payment' serves to disguise the agent behind these obligations. In effect these are decisions by the Municipality.

As a literacy practice, the invoice is an instrument of bureaucratic power, an instantiation of the modern government that relies on the unquestioned contribution of its citizens to the functioning of its public services. By using the above textual and grammatical features, the letter constructs and confirms the sender's, in this case the Municipality's, authority over the recipient. At the same time, the document is part and parcel of municipal policies that appeal to people's identity as subjects of the new Namibian state who have to contribute to the functioning of its public services.

In Foucault's (1988b) terms, the invoice is part of a 'technology of power' that, however, met with frequent resistance. Throughout my time in Namibia, there were regular reports in the newspapers about communities and neighbourhoods who had not paid their water bills. Usually, in these cases, the state owned provider, NamWater, threatened to suspend provision in the affected areas. These actions certify people's reluctance to accept their imposed roles as citizens, an identity which obviously clashed with their own views of the state and its responsibilities towards its people.

When Ana showed me the letter, her electricity had already been cut off because she had failed to pay the amount due. The harshness of the action taken against her brings to the open the false politeness of the letter. In this case, literacy acted as threat (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Barton and Hall 1999) and provided the ground for enforced action. That such literacy practices, in the eyes of my informants, were an intricate part of the power relations they felt subjected to, became evident in a conversation with another

learner, Susanna. Susanna had just managed to pay back the loan that had allowed her to acquire a plot on which she hoped in the future to build a house. When we discussed municipal services, she said that she certainly appreciated the fact that thanks to the credit the land now was hers. But, she added that, if she did not pay her bills, *they can still evict me*[10]. Susanna's statement testifies her ambiguous relationship with the new Municipality that despite its attempts to co-opt Katutura's residents into its discourses of development 'for all' and the obviously enabling effect of its policies, remained for Susanna a distinct entity of whose powers she was painfully aware.

As with other letters and bills, learners often asked their children to explain the content of the invoices (for a similar example see Kell 1994). Paying the bill was normally done in cash at the Municipality and this task was usually left to the children. We can see here, once again, the importance of literacy mediation as a strategy used by my informants to access the literacy practices of state institutions. Parents relied on their children's English literacy skills as an important asset which helped them in their dealings with bureaucratic literacy practices.

6. Functional versus social approaches to literacy: bureaucratic literacy practices in the NLPN classrooms

- Several of the literacy practices I discussed in this chapter are taught in the NLPN. 'Basic English', the main textbook for Stage 3, contains chapters on form filling and banking. These use simplified forms. In the promoter's handbook (DABE 1994b), teachers are invited to collect real forms and to use these as additional materials in the class. In another English textbook,

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[10] Susanna, 31 years old, Windhoek (Katutura), 19.7.2000, translated from Khoekhoegowab.

prepared for AUPE[11], learners have to complete copies of real forms from different Namibian banks[12].

During one of my visits to a Stage 3 group in Katutura, I observed learners practising form filling. In Chapter 5 of 'Basic English', simple forms and a short dialogue are used to introduce words such as first name, surname, married/single, address and signature (see next page *Figure 5.4*). The purpose of the forms is not explained, i.e. learners do not know whether it is part of an application form or a deposit slip or a telegram. The idea of the lesson is to introduce learners to writing in a form as well as to practise introductions orally. The 'Basic English' textbook contains 35 chapters. Form filling is introduced in Chapter 5, at a time when most learners will have learned English for a few weeks only.

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11 Adult Upper Primary Education, Stages 5 to 7 of the NLPN.

12 National Literacy Programme in Namibia: English Course, Book One, compiled by F. Haingura, L. L. Shaketange and U. Tjienda, DABE, MBEC.

LESSON 5 FORM–FILLING

Surname: .....

First name: .....

Maried or single.....

Address: .....

.....

.....

.....

Surname: .....

First name: .....

Maried or single.....

Address: .....

.....

.....

.....

EXERCISE 1: What's your name?
Where do you live?
Sit in a circle. Ask your neighbour her/his name and where she/he lives.
Maried or single? What is his/her address?

EXERCISE2: Sit in a circle. Introduce your neighbour to the others e.g. This is Julius. He lives in Okakarara.

EXERCISE 3: What's your surname?

Write it down:.....

What are your other names?

.....

What is your neighbour's surname?

.....

What are her/his other names?

.....

10

Figure 5.4: Page 10 from 'Basic English', learners' textbook, Stage 3

In the lesson I observed, the main activity was individual writing. Learners used the forms to practice writing their names and addresses. The class did

not discuss the possible purpose of such forms[13]. If one looks at the way forms were used in this lesson, it seems that re-contextualisation (Bernstein 1996) took place in the following way. The forms were taken out of their social context and immersed into a functional/technical discourse. The main purpose of the lesson I observed was to help participants to write their name and address in the right spaces on the form.

Kell (1999) describes similar processes of re-contextualisation related to the teaching of letter writing in a South African literacy programme. Reading her paper and comparing real forms with the simplified forms used in the textbook, brought up the question why the curriculum developers of the NLPN had chosen these simpler versions. Is it because their understanding of education made them assume that learning is to be organised in form of a structured process that goes from easy to more complex? While this does certainly make sense in common pedagogical discourse, it neglects the fact that learners in their daily life are involved in much more complicated uses of literacy that do not give them the chance to start with the easy parts and leave aside the rest. In 'real' life, Justus, Carolina and Elisabeth, whom I saw filling in the forms in their textbook, dealt with highly complex forms, such as the housing loan applications discussed earlier in this chapter. Crucially, these 'real' forms are always part of an institutional context and follow institutional rules which determine their meaning and purpose. The person who fills in such a form needs to know these rules.

Rockhill makes a similar argument with regards to the accessibility of public services to immigrants in the United States. As she rightly notes, communication with bureaucracies requires much more than 'filling in the blanks' of a form (Rockhill 1993: 165). There are a range of interrelated, at times ambiguous, rules and regulations the applicants need to be aware of. Following Rockhill, I suggest that any attempt to 'teach' people how such

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[13] Fieldnotes, classroom observation, Stage 3 group at Goreangab Junior Secondary School, Katutura, 13.6.2000.

systems work will have to include some form of 'critical language awareness' (Fairclough 1992b) that would reveal the meanings of the legal-rational idioms and the bureaucratic phrases contained in such documents. In a more critical perspective, the aim would be to make explicit the rules of banking, housing loans or municipal services as well as the policies and values they are rooted in (cf. Luke 1996).

What remained unaccounted for in the above lesson was that people like Carolina, Justus and Elisabeth had their own ways of engaging with such literacy practices and that these experiences allowed them to acquire important social skills. These skills form a pool of informally acquired experience and knowledge which could be the starting point for new learning in the classes. Furthermore, learners had their own understanding of banking, of housing issues and Municipality services. In my conversations with these learners, most of which were held – at least in part – in English, I was struck by the ability and ease with which some of them spoke about banks and loans. Quite obviously, although they often used mediators, they nevertheless were familiar with the procedures and knew many of the terms commonly used in banking. In the lesson I observed, however, not much of their knowledge was visible, as they studiously wrote and rewrote their names in the forms.

In this chapter, I discussed examples of bureaucratic literacy practices related to banking, housing and Municipality services. I showed how these are embedded in the bureaucratic authority of the state and of financial services. As the learners whom I men in the NLPN made regular use of these services, they engaged with a broad range of complex literacy and numeracy practices. In the following chapter, I turn to a different group of institutional literacy practices that were commonly used by my informants. These are the literacy practices of credits and hire-purchase agreements.

6. SHOPPING WITHOUT MONEY: LITERACIES OF CONSUMERISM

1. Introduction: 'The Foschini Personal Account. It's How You want to Pay'

The above sentence adorns the front cover of an application brochure for a 'Foschini card', a personal account that can be used to buy goods on credit in one of Namibia's largest chain stores. The slogan is of course intended to attract customers to the credit scheme. An application form is included in the brochure. Foschini, a South African company, has women's and children's clothing shops all over Namibia.

Buying goods on credit is a frequent practice in Windhoek and it is particularly popular with low income households that have very little cash available and no income to save. Through this world of shopping and credit, people are involved in a range of literacy and numeracy practices. These practices, albeit in some aspects similar to the bureaucratic uses of reading and writing discussed in the previous chapter, have their own characteristics. The ideological parameters that frame these commercial literacy practices are the discourses of marketing, consumerism and modern life-style.

In the following sections, I am particularly interested in how my informants, poor black Namibians, took up the new literacy practices of consumerism and how this relates to their changing identities and ways of living in post-independence Namibia. In this context, literacy is associated with the power of consumer capitalism and modern urban lifestyle as important societal discourses that shape people's aspirations and identities. Equally, it is associated with urbanisation, with social mobility and with the emergence of

new social hierarchies that in part supersede the former race-based inequalities.

Most of the big chain stores in Namibia offer personal accounts. Among informants, it was not uncommon to have several of such accounts. A personal account allows the customer to buy goods on credit, according to a payment plan that will be developed for each client. S/he receives a store card that resembles a bank or a credit card and can be used for payment when buying goods. Repayments have to be made on a monthly basis, the amount depending on the specific payment plan and the credit amount of the client.

In a similar way, furniture shops in Namibia offer customers opportunities to buy goods through hire-purchase schemes. According to information provided by two furniture shops, about 90% of their customers make use of these schemes[1]. It is common policy that a deposit has to be paid. However, even this initial deposit can be paid in small instalments and some shops offer special promotions that do not require any deposit at all.

2. Researching credit schemes and shop accounts

Although I had often observed people using shop cards at Foschini and other shops and department stores, it was only during my second period of fieldwork in 2000 that I became aware of the significance of these accounts and credit schemes as literacy practices. The first time credit letters were mentioned was in an interview with Magda, a learner from an evening class in Katutura. Magda told me that she received letters from her 'accounts'. She then explained that she had an account with 'Ellerines', a furniture shop. Ellerines sent her letters with information and the statement of her account[2]. In the interviews I conducted after my conversation with Magda, I discovered

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[1] Interviews with shop assistants at 'Beares' and 'Lewis', furniture shops in Windhoek, 28.7.2000.

[2] Interview with Magda, Windhoek (Katutura), 12.7.2000, interview conducted partly in English, partly in Khoekhoegowab.

that like John who had bought his TV set on credit, or Ana who had bought a sofa, many of the learners and teachers I knew had accounts with a shop or had purchased goods on credit.

Since credit schemes and accounts seemed to be a frequent and important literacy practice among learners and teachers, I tried in the remaining interviews to elicit more information about these schemes. I also spent time observing customers using their cards for payment and inquired in furniture and clothing shops about payment conditions. But I did not do a detailed ethnography of credit schemes and hire-purchase agreements. This would have gone far beyond the scope of what with the time and resources available I was able to do. However, the frequent use people make of these schemes and their importance as literacy practices would without doubt have justified a more detailed analysis. In the following sections I can only signal some of the issues that emerged from my discussions with learners and my analysis of the texts involved.

Several difficulties occurred in researching credit schemes. On the one hand, shop managers often treated me with suspicion, so that it was difficult to obtain detailed background information on the schemes and conditions. I also found credit schemes a difficult topic to discuss with learners. The problem was not so much that my interview partners were generally reluctant to talk about them. But I hesitated to ask them personal questions about their finances. Asking people about how they deal with loans and credit arrangements did create an uneasy situation, more so as in most cases I knew how much, or rather how little, they earned. I was aware of the conditions learners accepted when buying on credit but refrained from asking them directly whether they knew what they had got themselves into. Nevertheless, from the interviews it appeared that many were not aware of the exact conditions of payment. A further difficulty was that because my access to my informants' homes was limited, I did not have the opportunity to directly observe the process of reading and dealing with payment reminders and letters from shop. As with invoices and loan applications, my information

is based on conversations I had with informants about the credit schemes and the letters they received.

From my point of view, the credit schemes were highly exploitative. Yet the way my informants talked about them indicated a different view. John for example explained: *You can stay for a month not paying, then they will write you a letter to pay*[3]. Lisa, another learner, explained that she wanted to open an account to buy clothes. She worked from home, selling cooked sheep head. She wanted to use some of the money she earned for an account[4]. The way I interpret these statements is that learners regarded the credits as an opportunity rather than as exploitation. They certainly fulfilled a need. Comparing the average prices of consumer goods in Windhoek with the salaries of the learners I met, it was obvious that none of them could have afforded to buy a TV set in cash.

An important point that became clear in my interviews and conversations with learners and teachers is that if they were concerned with the credit schemes, this was not because of the reading and writing involved, but because they worried about the amount of money they still owed. Ana for example told me that she tried to pay N$200 every month, a relatively high amount, for her sofa and kitchen set, *so that it goes quickly*[5]. Whether this is an indication that she knew about the interest rate she paid or not, I do, however, not know.

In general, my informants did not find the letters to be a problem. Indeed, many used phrases such as 'balance of payments' or 'amount due' confidently. All knew that the main function of the letters was to remind them

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[3] Interview with John, Windhoek, 19.7.2000, interview conducted in English with occasional translations from Oshindonga.

[4] Interview with Lisa, Windhoek (Katutura) 19.7.2000, translated from Khoekhoegowab.

[5] Interview with Ana, Windhoek (Katutura), 31.7.2000, translated from Khoekhoegowab.

of their next payment. Those who had difficulties with the letters, asked their children for help. Once again this indicates that in the family the younger generation, who is usually more proficient in English, fulfils an important role as literacy mediator.

3. Credit schemes as literacy practices

Having an account with a shop or buying furniture through a hire-purchase agreement involves paperwork. In order to open an account, a form has to be filled out. All the application forms I collected are written in English. However, the form can be filled out with the help of a relative, a friend or a sales assistant (cf. Breier 1994). At Foschini, the senior sales advisor told me that, if a customer has difficulties with the form, she finishes it for her or asks a colleague, who speaks the customer's languages, to help.

In one furniture shop that I visited for my research, the sales assistants explained that they usually fill in the forms for the contract themselves, even if the customer is literate. Malan (1996a) has found a similar attitude among shop managers in a furniture shop in Bellville South. In another shop in Windhoek, the agreements were set up on computer. All the client had to do was to provide the necessary information orally and to sign the contract.

In the above situations, the sales assistant fulfils the role of a literacy mediator. But s/he has a different task than the literacy mediators in state institutions which I discussed in the previous chapter. Both have to ensure that the correct procedures are being followed and they often do so simply by doing all the writing themselves. But the sales assistant in a shop also has to ensure that the customer feels at ease and is happy with the offer made. Otherwise, s/he might simply leave and buy at the next shop.

The relationship between the customer and the institution therefore is different, something that is also reflected in the mailings to the client. Buyers receive monthly letters from their shops that inform them of the statement of their account and remind them of payments due. Normally, these mailings are

in English. Some South African companies send their customers bilingual payment slips, written in English and Afrikaans. In one letter from a furniture shop, which I was given by a learner, the bilingual payslip was attached to a typed letter that was written in English only.

With the exception of one learner who had arranged a direct debit facility to pay back the loan from Ellerines, all other learners to whom I spoke made their payments in cash, in the shop. For each instalment paid they received a receipt.

In their studies of literacy practices in different South African communities, Breier (1994) and Malan (1996a) mention accounts and buying on credit. But neither Malan nor Breier take a closer look at the texts and practices involved in hire-purchase contracts. The reason why I discuss hire-purchase agreements in such detail here is because they illustrate how literacy has become a routine component of many everyday life activities. Furthermore, credit and leasing schemes are telling examples of social literacies, the kind of everyday life uses of reading and writing that are typically not included in adult literacy programmes.

I collected examples of letters and application forms from shops. They are written in a specific language and use terms such as balance, deposit, amount due, arrears or statement of account. These letters rely on a specific mix of different discourses and registers, related to the different functions they serve. Furthermore, they are a hybrid of a letter and a form. On the next page is a copy of a letter from 'Jet', a clothing shop, to Emma, a single mother who lives in Katutura (see next page *Figure 6.1*).

Figure 6.1: Letter from Jet to Emma

The main task of the bill is to inform Emma of the balance of her account and to remind her of her monthly payment. This is done in the upper half of the letter which is divided into two parts. The left-centre part contains a list of the different fees Emma has to pay, including the interest rate for the current

month. The right side of the upper half is to be used as a payment slip when paying the next instalment. There are two amounts, the original monthly instalment decided by the company after Emma made her first purchases and the instalment calculated for the current month. The payment slip also stipulates when this is due. Several other messages are included. There is a warning of charges that will be made in case of late payments. Furthermore, an indirect invitation to buy more products from the shop is made: it is explained that the customer will be granted more credit, if she pays regularly.

Only once in the entire upper half of the letter, the receiver is addressed directly, when the company thanks her for her last payment. The letter has no opening address which gives it an impersonal tone. As in the invoices discussed in the previous chapter, no individual agent appears in the letter, but an unspecified 'institutional voice' (Jones 2000b) that symbolises the power of the company. Presumably, the upper half is part of a standard letter all customers receive. The language used is formal. Different messages are included, all of which refer to the company's power to grant or refuse credits and to impose payment conditions. Literacy, in this context, is used to communicate and to confirm the company's rules and conditions to which the customer is obliged. There is for example a fee to be paid for the card, as well as a members fee for the 'Jet club', an additional offer of the company.

In the application leaflet for a Jet card, the card fee is mentioned, however not the amount to be paid each month. The brochure also suggests that for 'a small monthly fee', the customer can join the 'Jet Club'. The terms and conditions of Jet's credit scheme are explained on the application leaflet. Significantly, this is done on the back of the brochure, in small script. The conditions laid out in the text are far from straightforward. The most important sentence appears to be the following: 'The selling price, all charges forming part of the principal debt and the finance charge rate are now not known or determinable, but will be reflected on your statement' (Jet Value Card, Terms and Conditions). First of all, this means that at the date of purchase customers do not know how much interest they will eventually pay.

Accordingly, the so-called payment plan, that is set up at the beginning of an agreement, is subject to change. As many other clothing shops, Jet advertises with a 6-months-interest-free period. But the rate is not guaranteed, e.g. failure to pay in time results in 'late payment charges' and higher interest rates (ibid.). In these cases, interest will be charged from the date of purchases. The rate a company is allowed to charge is regulated by law.

Jet's application brochure illustrates how companies manage to 'hide' the specific payment conditions attached to their credit offers. They do so to a large extent by relying on specific literacy practices, e.g. forms that include a small print on the back or letters that use deliberately vague terms and phrases. At Jet, if purchases are not paid off after the six months, customers pay 23.5% on their outstanding balance. But this figure is not declared in the brochure or on the attached application form. Nor is it mentioned on any of the posters that are displayed in the shop, inviting customers to join in the credit scheme.

The lower part of Emma's letter contains more information. But now a different discourse is used, i.e. the language and ideology of advertising. As part of this switch to a new genre, now the receiver is addressed personally and the language becomes informal. A special offer for a mobile phone is made. This part of the letter explicitly addresses the recipient's identity as a consumer and her/his presumed desire to acquire consumer goods such as mobile phones. Mobile phones are one of the status symbols of the new black middle class. Prior to independence, Windhoek's telephone system was largely confined to the business and government areas and the white neighbourhoods. Since then, it has been expanded to other areas of the city. However, mobile phones are extremely popular and many of those who entered the ranks of the state employed middle class have acquired one. In Katutura, more households are connecting to the telephone system. But for many mobile phones remain unaffordable.

The lay-out of the letter mirrors the complexity of its content. It contains many different messages that are given various degrees of importance

depending on where they are placed on the page. Different fonts and letter sizes, boxes and other features are used to differentiate and highlight various parts of the text. The font chosen reflects the character of different messages. The offer for a mobile phone is printed in a 'softer' font than the administrative parts of the letter.

In the letter, linguistic codes are integrated with other symbols, for example on the reverse which contains an offer for a pair of trainers. The picture on the back of the letter shows a foot, wearing one of the trainers, about to kick somebody's behind. Below the picture, Emma could read the following capture: 'If you don't buy a pair of active shoes from us at R79[6], you'll kick yourself'. 'Reading' this message is obviously a matter of 'social semiotics' (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) that relies on a combination of image and text. As common in advertisements, image and caption work together to create a specific meaning.

The messages that are included in the various parts of the letter appeal to different roles the recipient takes on vis-à-vis the company. On the one hand, Emma is addressed as a debtor and hence subjected to the authority of the letter writer. The following statement, again using the passive mode, amplifies the authoritarian voice of the sender: 'Late payment charges will be added to overdue accounts'. Further down on the same page and on the back, the roles are changed. Now, the promotional purpose of the letter is central. As its recipient, Emma is addressed as a customer and positioned as having authority (Fairclough 1995). Grammatically this is realised in the way she is addressed as an active subject. But even this part of the text attempts to prescribe or persuade, albeit in a more subtle way. Behind its casual tone, it contains a strong statement about the kind of people shops and businesses want poor Namibians to be: people who want the goods of the middle-class,

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[6] R = South African Rand. The Rand is also used in Namibia. The Namibian dollar is tied up with the Rand.

who therefore are willing to buy on credit, but who will not fail to pay off their debt.

Emma's letter is an example of how in their correspondence with customers, Windhoek's shops invoke important societal discourses that appear to have high currency in post-colonial Namibia. By promoting new lifestyles and aspirations, these discourses appeal to many poor Namibians' sense of deprivation and their aspirations to a new and better life. Clothes for example are important signs of class differences that nowadays overshadow the former race-based disparities. They signal social status and respectability. For my informants, clothes were important. Many of the cleaners did not wear their uniforms, but preferred to arrive at work dressed in similar fashion as the secretaries and receptionists. Susanna, a learner in a class in Katutura, told me how she tried to save money from selling cooked food, so that she would be able to open an account with 'Edgars', a relatively expensive department store in the centre of Windhoek [7].

As people like Susanna learned the language of consumerism and engaged with the literacy practices of shopping, they acquired new social identities. The 'Foschini' card, the letters and brochures received, are visible attributes of these identities. In Barton's and Hamilton's categories (Barton and Hamilton 2000), this could be called a case of literacy as display. Many learners, with whom I discussed accounts, did not send their children to pay their monthly instalments, but preferred to go themselves. As I often saw the cleaners of the Ministry using their lunch hour for a walk to town and a stroll through the shops, I assume that visiting the shops for most was a pleasurable pastime. How these women engaged with commercial literacies was a reflection of their new identities as modern urban shoppers.

But shopping literacies were not only part of broader social practices that promote consumer capitalism. In Namibia, they were also firmly embedded in

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[7] Interview with Susanna, 31 years old, 19.7.2000, interview translated from Khoekhoegowab.

discourses of social mobility and upliftment whose role models for my informants were the members of Namibia's new black middle class. As literacy practices, shop cards, payment reminders and advertisements, were intrinsically linked to the processes of social stratification that characterise Namibian society since independence.

The dominance of the modern mass consumer as a phenomenon, far from being confined to 'developing' countries such as Namibia, is associated with new cultural and societal discourses that become increasingly hegemonic all over the world. The power of consumer goods as status symbols, or the role of 'brands' as markers of identity (cf. Klein 2001) are examples of these world-wide phenomena. I will continue to explore the role of identity, both in relation to local and to global circumstances, in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 when I discuss tourism and literacy.

4. Literacy, power and identity: how my informants experienced credit schemes

Credit schemes are a common practice not only in Namibia. The use of credit cards, loans and financial schemes that offer long-term payment is frequent in the industrialised countries as well where credit card offers are a regular ingredient of our daily junk mail. Such financial schemes relate to consumer capitalism as a modern (or postmodern) form of power that is not located in the state, but in the economy and in society at large. But do these credit agreements provide real opportunities or are they merely exploitative? And what role does literacy play in these practices? Is literacy used to hide the exploitative conditions of the schemes or can it be a resource that helps people to be better informed and more empowered credit shoppers?

These questions were on my mind while I researched credit schemes and discussed their effects with learners and teachers. However, I soon became aware of the limitations in the way I approached these questions during fieldwork and later in my analysis. As an outsider, I tended to approach credit

schemes from a personal point of view and was easily judgmental. Yet at the same time, unconsciously, I slipped into a pseudo-neutral discourse where I tried to make an 'objective' statement about the nature of these schemes.

But what is much more important here is how credit agreements were experienced by the people who used them. Accordingly, as a methodological device, it was necessary to push aside my own feelings and to take a closer look at the power issues involved from the point of view of my informants. Foucault built his genealogies of power on a similar approach. His method entailed a position of neutrality that allowed him to dispense with a priori judgements and to turn away from the common preoccupation with the grand instances of repression. Instead, he looked at the processes through which particular forms of power became possible (Gordon 1980). My perspective is similar, but focuses in particular on the role of literacy in these processes.

How then did my informants experience credit schemes, housing loans or some of the other bureaucratic practices that I discussed in the previous chapter? As mentioned earlier, learners who used credit schemes did not necessarily regard these as exploitative. Furthermore, in our discussions, most of them came across as confident in the practices of credit agreements. Shopping on credit was a social skill they had acquired. That they did not understand every word of the contract did not hinder them from successfully engaging with these literacy practices. The following examples intend to highlight this point.

Sofia, a cleaner in the MBEC, told me about the account for clothes she used to have. She explained that when she could not afford to pay the full monthly instalment, the shop had accepted a partial payment[8]. But this 'rule' was not stated in any of the credit letters or brochures I collected.

The above reveals a crucial point about the social rules that govern credit schemes. What is important when using credit is not only and not essentially

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8 Interview with Sofia, 20.7.2000

the ability to decode written texts. It requires making sense in much broader ways, including knowing oral or unstated rules. But what is perhaps more interesting in this example is how people like Sofia 'take hold' (cf. Kulick and Stroud 1993) of the literacies of consumerism in a way that testifies her understanding of the underlying system and the options available. That she managed to change the rules of payment, in my view, reveals that she must have known that as a customer she was not entirely without influence. It would indeed be wrong to see Sofia, John, Emma and Ana merely as the exploited debtors, devoid of any power or ability to use the credit schemes for their own benefits. Shops like Foschini and Beares depend on them as customers. Because the great majority of Namibians are far too poor to buy a TV with cash, without the credit schemes, Foschini or Beares could not survive in Namibia, much less make a profitable income. Therefore, it is in the shops' interest to keep customers even if they do not always pay their debt on time.

To repeat, credit without doubt was seen as providing opportunities. John for example made it clear that without the credit, he would not have had a TV. John used credit schemes and credit literacies in order to access resources that otherwise he would not have been able to attain. He tried to adopt a life-style, which was powerfully presented to him in the advertising campaigns of Windhoek's shops. By doing so, he reacted to the social discourses that circulated through his lifeworld. Crucially, these included discourses that emanated from the public sphere and the economy, but had extended into John's and other people's lifeworlds (cf. Habermas 1988).

Following from the above, we can say that my informants from Katutura defined themselves in relation to the discourses 'that surrounded them' (Sola and Bennet 1994: 134). Their identities were framed by two opposing but related reactions to the new Namibian society: feelings of exclusion and inclusion. What Sofia, John and Albertine bought, how they dressed and the things they desired, were expressions of both their feelings of exclusion from the new Namibia and its discourses of mobility, consumerism and modern

lifestyle and their desire to be a part of it. In a similar way, their wish to be literate in English reflects their desire for inclusion in the new society, in which English has a very high status (see Chapters 4 and 10). At a conceptual level, these statements reflect processes of engagement and identification with societal discourses and their results in the form of new identities. These can be, as in Chapter 4, the identity of a learner, or, as in the present chapter, the identity of a modern consumer.

Furthermore, the process of alignment with hegemonic discourses is an ambiguous process and I believe it is also experienced as such. Among my informants, shopping indeed induced feelings of power as well as of disempowerment. Learners told me about the things they were able to buy. But they also spoke about the burden of having to pay off the money they owe, about their salaries that were never enough to take care of everything they needed, about feeling disempowered, dependent and poor. Their experiences, like their subjectivities, were mixed. The monthly letters they received induced the same feelings, pleasure, as Ana said, when she saw that *it goes away quickly*[9], pain, when like Hilda, a literacy promoter in Katutura, she received her monthly payment slip and saw how much money had been taken away to pay off her debt[10]. She and others saw credits and loans as both a burden and a blessing.

These reactions are far from surprising. Whilst credit schemes and loans provide opportunities, they also subject Hilda and Ana to the burden of monthly payments they can hardly afford. Being able to buy in cash is simply cheaper, thus the credit agreements privilege those who are privileged already.

Regarding my understanding of reading and writing as a social and discursive practice, it follows from the above that for the people with whom I

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[9] Interview with Ana, 21.7.2000

[10] Interview with Hilda, 8.9.2000, interview conducted in English.

worked in Namibia, literacy was not only an important instrument of bureaucratic and commercial power. For people like Sofia, Ana or John, it was deeply embedded in processes of identity construction and in their struggle to find a place in the new Namibian society. As part of these struggles, literacy was related to the possibility to access economic resources, in the form of goods and jobs. But it was also associated with what I would call cultural resources, i.e. alignment with powerful cultural models and lifestyles. Power, in these contexts, was manifested both in the material affluence of the middle classes as well as in the hegemony of the discourses and values these same middle classes adhered to.

Regarding the conceptual knot of literacy, discourse and identity, the main conclusion that follows from my discussion of Foschini's and Jet's credit offers is that acquiring new literacy practices – in my case the literacies of shopping and credits – for my informants went along with apprenticeship in new discourses and the construction of new identities. Literacy, therefore, cannot be understood as an autonomous skill, but is to be seen as enmeshed in social practices and in the discourses and identities these are tied up with.

5. Teaching the literacy practices of credits and leasing schemes?

Buying on credit is not discussed in the literacy materials of the NLPN and I have never witnessed a lesson on shopping where the teachers discussed hire-purchase agreements or credit schemes with the class. There are, however, chapters on shopping in several of the textbooks, but these deal with groceries only.

While I researched shopping and credit schemes, I wondered whether and how these practices could be included in the NLPN. This raised several issues. First, in my discussions with learners it was far from clear whether they themselves would want to discuss credit schemes in the classes. My own enthusiasm for everyday life literacies may not be shared by the learners, as it does not match their ideas about literacy and teaching (see Chapter 10). My

own views are strongly influenced by the new social understanding of literacy. However, as a 'theory', the social model of reading and writing, has rarely been 'tested' against learners' and teachers' views[11].

The second question is in what form credit schemes could be included in the classes. Bhola, one of the external evaluators of the NLPN, may have had such issues in mind, when in a short section of his evaluation report he discussed the 'Competence of using English in social and official settings' (Bhola 1995). Yet he fails to address the social and discursive aspects of learning literacy practices such as credit schemes. He talks about the move from mother tongue literacy to English literacy and asks whether one year of English (referring to Stage 3 of the NLPN) will be enough to secure 'genuine participation in the social, economic and political structures around the learners in cities and townships' (ibid.: 61). Since he does not specify what for him would be such structures or what he means by 'social settings', I cannot know whether credit schemes were part of what he had in mind. What is perhaps more important is that the tenor of his argument is about learning 'skills' and learning 'a new language' (ibid.).

In contrast to the above, a social model of literacy would place the emphasis on credits as social and critical literacies. This would include a critical analysis of the underlying structures and the power basis from which credits operate. I may not do justice to Bhola's position, but it seems that his views are strongly circumscribed by a functional approach. Such an approach is mainly concerned with employability, with new literacy skills (and not with practices) and with the ability to cope with what is required, disregarding any underlying political and social issues. Lacking is a discussion of identity, i.e. that people want to buy the consumer goods offered by Foschini and Ellerines. Also lacking in the functional model is any discussion of power in relation to literacy. What for example happens when customers fail to make

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11 One such case is a literacy project for older people in a township in Durban, South Africa. In this project, learners opted for a much more school-like approach than the organisers had planned (HelpAge International 1998).

their payments? I strongly suspect that in such cases the contract, the customer's signature on it and the correspondence from the shop become important legal devices for the company to pursue the debtor.

A related issue is raised by Luke (1994). He argues that teaching specific genres, texts and skills, is not likely to lead to the often claimed 'empowerment' of literacy learners. His point is that power, contrary to what common discourses of literacy would have us believe, cannot be located in a specific text or skill. In other words, a specific literacy practice does not have social power per se. To what extent literacy practices are powerful, i.e. translate into capital, depends on broader social forces and economic dynamics (Luke 1994: 331). Accordingly, becoming competent in a specific genre, does not guarantee that in the actual literacy event, the person has more decision-making or acting power. What would change if people learned the literacy practices of credit and shopping better than they already have? Even if people were more competent in the genre of credit letters and understood all its terms and rules, would they then automatically be in a position to avoid these credit schemes or to make more 'empowered' use of them? The important fact that remains is that many black Namibians are simply too poor to avoid the credit schemes and that other means of saving money for most are not an option. On the other hand, and this is perhaps not sufficiently acknowledged in Luke's argument or in Gee's (1996) insistence on literacy as equalling the 'mastery' of a secondary discourse, my data has shown that Namibians already engage with many dominant literacy practices in a way that is not as 'disempowered' as it appears to be.

6. Summary and conclusions: beyond the world of bureaucracies and consumerism

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I discussed literacies of work and everyday life in Katutura, the former black township of Windhoek. Many of these literacies are related to powerful social institutions and the dominant discourses and genres these promote.

As I explained earlier, the uses of reading and writing I presented here do not cover the full range of literacy practices learners of the NLPN are involved in. Another important domain of literacy in Katutura is the church. In Chapter 10, I will show, how in some of the classes in Katutura, religious literacy practices have been integrated into the lessons.

Other literacies that I observed and discussed in Katutura, but did not research in detail, were private letter writing and reading magazines and newspapers. Most of these home literacy practices make use of the local languages or Afrikaans, but not English.

My aim in these three chapters was to show that the people with whom I worked in Katutura, be it at work, while they shopped or when they visited an officer in the Ministry, made use of a broad range of highly complex and socially and institutionally embedded literacy practices. As clients and customers, they were involved in such practices mainly in their position as recipients and debtors and a lot of the reading and writing was actually done for them by clerks and shop managers. My informants relied on their social capital when they engaged literacy mediators, to help them deal with bureaucratic and commercial literacies. Despite the constraining effects of modern institutional discourses and their associated literacy practices, they used their social and cultural capital to access the resources these provide. In some cases, they employed their own literacy and discourse strategies in order to renegotiate dominant meanings and to challenge hegemonic practices.

Bureaucratic and commercial literacy practices together made up a substantial part of the literacy world my informants engaged with. Contrary to what public perception often assumes, their lifeworld was not a closed environment or a stable world. It was a world that had changed and kept on changing, where new social practices and new literacies were being introduced, while some of the older ones gradually lost their currency. As the learners in the MBEC and in Katutura engaged with these new literacies, they displayed and negotiated new social roles. These processes of self-

construction related to how different groups and social classes positioned themselves vis-à-vis others in the new Namibian society and attempted to take hold of the opportunities the new Namibia appeared to provide.

In the following three chapters (Chapters 7, 8 and 9), I will continue to discuss literacies in changing times and as part of new cultural and economic practices. My example will be the role of reading and writing in the tourism sector. In Chapter 11, I will finally turn to the 'inside' literacy practices of the NLPN and describe the processes of teaching and learning in some of the classes I visited during my fieldwork. In Chapter 11, the final chapter of this thesis, I stay with the NLPN and its 'inside' literacy practices, but discuss their relationship with literacies 'outside'. In doing so, I attempt to provide a tentative comparison between the various 'inside' and 'outside' literacy practices I have discussed in this thesis, focussing in particular on the range of societal and individual discourses these literacies are embedded in.

PART III: LITERACY AND TOURISM

7. SPEAKING (AND WRITING) THE LANGUAGE OF TOURISTS: LITERACY PRACTICES IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

1. Introduction: why tourism?

At first glance, tourism may seem an unusual topic to study in relation to literacy. Why tourism as part of a study on adult literacy is a question that certainly needs explication.

Earlier in this thesis, I located my research at the interface between literacies 'inside', i.e. in the classrooms of the NLPN, and literacies 'outside', that is, in 'real' life. From the onset, my idea was to include work-related or workplace literacies (see for example O'Connor 1993; Levett and Lanksheer 1994; Gibson 1996; Breier 1996; Watters 1996; Lanksheer 1997) as a central context of everyday life literacies. An important reason for doing so was that among the learners whom I met in the NLPN, many had come to the literacy programme hoping that their participation would help them to find work or a better job to improve their income.

Tourism or tourism work as a form of workplace literacy first caught my attention when reading the report of the overall evaluation of the NLPN conducted in 1995. Several passages in the document point to a strong interest among participants in learning English (Lind 1996). Furthermore, the evaluation report contains two pieces of information related to tourism. First, a 43-year-old woman explains that she wants to learn English, because she wants to be able to communicate with tourists and travellers (ibid.:22). Second, the report mentions a proposal by one of the external evaluators to include tourism as a content unit in the teaching materials for stage 2 (Bhola 1995; Lind 1996). Apart from a short chapter on tourism in Module 1 of 'Know

your land and people', one of the textbooks for AUPE (Stages 5 to 7 of the NLPN), tourism is not discussed in the NLPN.

The above indications of the tourism industry's role in inducing new learning demands drew my attention to what I later came to call 'tourism literacies' or 'tourism literacy practices' (see below). At the same time, my general readings on Namibia and the preparations for my fieldwork made me aware that Namibia has recently become a popular tourist destination.

Based on these insights and discoveries, I formulated a number of preliminary research questions that were to guide my work in the area of tourism and literacy. The main purpose of my research was to identify and describe uses of reading and writing in tourism-related occupations and businesses. My primary concern was to gain an understanding of the social and ideological nature of reading and writing in tourism rather than to develop any approach to teaching tourism literacies.

How, then, did I design my case study on tourism? Although the connection between literacy and tourism appeared to be relevant, I began my fieldwork with a good deal of apprehension as to the theoretical soundness as well as the practicability of my project. I remained in doubt to what extent tourism workers and people who come in contact with tourists need literacy. Luckily, fieldwork seemed to confirm my assumptions. As a participant-observer and a tourist myself, I observed a range of context- and task-specific literacy practices that are crucial to tourism work. I will introduce these in the present chapter.

While I visited some of the touristic 'hotspots' of Namibia, members of the local community explained to me why they wanted to learn English. On numerous occasions, I observed how local people interacted with tourists, both orally and by using written language. In Ndonga Linea, a village situated about 60km east of Rundu in the north-east of Namibia, an elderly lady, who attended an adult literacy class, explained to me why she and her neighbours made the effort to learn English. Their village is situated next to the 'Caprivi Highway', the main road that links central Namibia to the tourist attractions of

the north-east: the Okavango Delta in Botswana and the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The road is also important for trade and business. Travellers and tourists, the woman explained, stop along the road and ask the villagers for directions. The only person in the village who spoke English was the teacher. If he was not at home, the old woman added, nobody could communicate with the visitors[1].

In Kaokoveld[2], in the far north-west of Namibia, I was told by the head of a family, whose homestead was a 'demonstration village' (a homestead that can be visited by groups of tourists), that the children should go to school to learn about the 'new things'. They should also learn to speak the language of the people who visit them, because, as he said, there needed to be at least one person in the family who could communicate with the tourists[3].

Both the above statements relate primarily to the need to communicate with tourists orally. However, as the examples of tourism literacies that I discuss in this and the next chapters will reveal, 'speaking' the language of tourists is not the only skill tourism workers need. Being able to read and write in the tourists' language, the ability to understand and to use the registers, the discourses and the metaphors of tourism language is equally important. However, as argued earlier in Chapter 2, in tourism, as in many other social and economic practices, written and oral language are used concomitantly. A further characteristic of tourism literacies is the frequent use of photographs, sign symbols and logos, for example in promotional brochures. Finally, the above excerpts from my fieldnotes highlight the central role of English as the

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[1] Fieldnotes, Ndonga Linea, 10.10.1999.

[2] Kaokoveld or Kaokoland is the term mostly used in the tourism literature, in publications on Namibia and in public discourse to describe what in administrative terms is known as the northern parts of the Kunene region. The continued use of the terms Kaokoveld or Kaokoland that formerly denoted the Kaoko homeland created by the South African administration, is another example of how the verbal constructions of apartheid continue to have currency in post-apartheid Namibia. In this case, the tourism industry contributes to the perpetuation of colonial spatial terminology.

[3] Fieldnotes, Epupa, Kaokoveld, 14.8.2000.

main language of tourism in Namibia. Accordingly, my discussion in the following sections will focus on the role of English literacy practices in tourism.

2. Overview of Chapters 7, 8 and 9

In this and the following chapters I present and discuss a range of tourism-related literacy practices. The remaining sections of Chapter 7 contain a brief summary of my research questions and an overview of tourism development in Namibia. I then introduce the tourism workers who were my main informants and briefly describe their uses of reading and writing. In Chapter 8, I turn my attention to a specific group of tourism literacy practices which occupies a central place in my research. I call these 'promotional tourism literacy practices', for example signposts, flyers and brochures. I analyse these literacy practices with the help of several interpretive clues, notably the concept of 'tourism discourses' and the question of local knowledge, power and identity in relation to what appear to be dominant tourism literacies.

In Chapter 9, I broaden my framework of analysis in order to address the wider discursive and structural contexts that affect local tourism and local tourism literacy practices. I discuss the impact of increased institutionalisation and professionalisation on local tourism development in Namibia. Literacy, in this context, is linked to questions of training, standardisation and competition in the dense tourism market. Geographically, the chapter leads me to look beyond the micro-contexts of local tourism literacies to issues of globalisation and what has been called the New Work Order (cf. Gee, Hull and Lanksheer 1996; Gee and Lanksheer 1997; Holland, C. et al. 1998; Gee 2000).

3. What is there to read and write in tourism: the research questions

The primary purpose of my case study was to find out about the kind of 'literacy work' tourism-related jobs and occupations require. From the onset, my research was conceived as an exploratory study that was deliberately kept broad and flexible. Since internationally no study yet exists on tourism and

literacy, I could not rely on previous research and had to depend on my own discoveries.

There exists, however, a small number of studies on the role of language in tourism and I draw on these for my own work. Dann's (1996) 'The Language of Tourism', to date the only comprehensive study of tourism language from a sociolinguistic perspective, has been particularly helpful. Dann provides a detailed analysis of the ideological meanings of tourism language as well as the media and techniques through which these are achieved. Although he does not explicitly distinguish between written and oral modes, his book contains analytic accounts of tourism texts. However, like other writers who discuss language (see for example Cohen and Cooper 1986), Dann privileges the perspective of the tourism industry and of the tourists themselves. He devotes a whole chapter to the discussion of tourism language as a 'language of social control' (Dann 1996: 68). His main concern is with the way the tourism industry uses language in order to regulate and control tourists' behaviours and expectations as well as their interactions with hosts. He does not elaborate on how local tourism workers and hosts take up the languages and discourses of tourism.

Unlike Dann and his colleagues, many social anthropologists, who are interested in tourism in the so-called developing world, have looked at tourism's relationship to cultural change and the consequences of tourism for local populations[4]. But these studies do not discuss language in much detail. Chambers (2000) devotes a short chapter of his introductory book on the anthropology of tourism to the role of language. He and others mention language as a required skill for tourism workers (ibid.; Patullo 1996).

Chambers (2000: 105) notes two primary functions of language in tourism: to establish the structures and meanings of communication between hosts and guests and to advertise specific tourism products. The role of language in

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[4] For an overview of how anthropologists have addressed these issues see Burns (1999).

the marketing of tourism has indeed received wide attention. Tourism literacy practices, although not termed as such, are discussed in a range of papers and articles that are concerned with advertising and promotion in tourism (see for example Thurot and Thurot 1983; Omoniyi 1998). The positions brought forward in these papers have informed my approach, particularly the notion of 'tourism discourses' (Thurot and Thurot 1983; Lindknud 1998) that I have adapted for my study. Related to this, the question of the commodification and representation of culture in tourism, is a central concern for several researchers (see for example Greenwood 1989; Wai-Teng Leong 1997; Oakes 1998). I found this a relevant theme for my own discussion of tourism literacy practices.

Despite the many insights these studies provided, when it came to the concrete question of how, empirically, I should approach the topic of tourism literacies, by and large, I stood on my own. Accordingly, many of my initial activities were devoted to exploring possible field sites and identifying relevant areas and issues.

Initially, my plans were to include two regions in my study: Windhoek, as the main arrival point for all foreign visitors, and the north-eastern regions of the Kavango and Caprivi. Kavango and Caprivi are popular tourist destinations and are frequently used for stopovers on the way to the Okavango Delta in Botswana and the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. I began my fieldwork on tourism with visits to the Caprivi in July and August 1999 and the Kavango in October the same year. In both cases, my contacts with local tourism workers provided important initial insights and I made plans to return for a longer stay in the following year. However, due to unexpected political developments related to the civil war in Angola, which affected both the Caprivi and the Kavango, I could not pursue my research in these regions in 2000[5].

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[5] In July 1999, when I visited the Caprivi, the 'Caprivi Liberation Army', a movement that seeks the independence of the region from Namibia, launched an attack on the

Accordingly, in summer 2000, instead of returning to Kavango and Caprivi, I had to choose new areas for my fieldwork. While I continued to work in Windhoek, I also conducted fieldwork in Kaokoland in the north-west and in Damaraland in the north-central areas of Namibia.

The disadvantages of the above circumstances are obvious. First, I could not build on the preliminary work done in the Caprivi and Kavango in 1999. Second, I ended up including more field sites than originally planned. On the positive side, this allowed me to observe a wider range of tourism-related occupations than those included in my original design. But because I did not always stay long in one place, some of my explorations lack a more detailed understanding of the situated practices involved in tourism. It was not always possible to gain deeper insights into the views of local tourism workers.

After initial inquiries into the structures of the tourism industry, the kind of employment offered and the qualifications required, I decided to focus my study on independent tourism workers and the so-called community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs). In recent years, a number of CBTEs have been set up in the communal areas[6]. Community-based tourism in Namibia benefits from a favourable policy environment and receives support from international donors and national as well as international NGOs. I chose CBTEs and local tourism workers rather than for example employees of hotels, national parks or private tour operators, because their efforts struck me as important initiatives by communities and individuals to benefit from tourism. I presumed that in order to do so, local tourism workers would need

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regional capital, Katima Mulilo. Because of this incident, I was forced to leave the Caprivi and to return to Windhoek. When I began the second part of my fieldwork in April 2000, the civil war in Angola had spilled over into the Kavango and made any research there or in the Caprivi impossible. The data from Kavango and Caprivi I use in Chapters 7, 8 and 9 is based on my two visits to the regions in summer and autumn 1999.

6 In a brochure published by NACOBTA, the Namibian Community Based Tourism Association, 22 CBTEs are presented. While I conducted fieldwork in 1999 and 2000, several more CBTEs were in the process of being established or becoming a member of NACOBTA.

to make some use of reading and writing. In terms of understanding the significance and role of these local tourism literacy practices, I wanted to find out how they fare in the wake of national and global tourism literacies that play a crucial role in tourism in Namibia. My primary task therefore was to unpack the meanings of these dominant tourism literacy practices and to understand their effect on local cultures and local identities. In order to do so, I not only had to look at the representations of local culture created for tourists, but at the social and economic relationships within which the encounter between tourists and hosts takes place.

The main finding of my study is that local tourism workers, many of whom have low levels of formal education, nevertheless make regular use of complex reading and writing practices. Their literacy practices rely on the use of different tourism registers, for example 'green speech' (Dann 1996), and are patterned by a range of discourses, for example discourses of authenticity.

Why then do I consider tourism to be an apt topic for the study of literacy as a social and discursive practice? And what exactly are 'tourism literacy practices'? To begin with, tourism literacy practices, as I define the concept here, are the reading and writing activities of the tourism industry, of tourism workers and tourists themselves. My focus, however, is on the reading and writing activities of local tourism workers and CBTEs.

As a social and economic activity, tourism is characterised by the relationship between hosts and guests[7] (Smith 1989) and the institutional and

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[7] I use the term 'guests' to refer to tourists and travellers. Tourists visit places for the purpose of leisure. There are no strict distinctions between travellers and tourists (Nash 1996), but the former may be travelling over longer periods of time and not for the same reasons as tourists. An example are pilgrims (for an overview of different attempts to categorise tourists and travellers see Chambers 2000). Furthermore, there are people who travel for business purposes. Again, this is not a clear-cut category, because a business trip can include sightseeing and other touristic activities. My focus in this study is on the typical three-week holiday maker and, to a lesser extent, on travellers who stay longer. For ease of presentation, I use the word 'tourist' as a generic term, including long-term travellers and those whose travels

social structures in which this encounter takes place. To a large extent, the host/guest relationship and its mediation through the employees of the tourism and hospitality industry relies on written communication. Any reading and writing practices in tourism are shaped by the social and economic context of the tourism industry, the communicative practices that it employs and the cultural values that guide the behaviour and expectations of both guests and hosts. Furthermore, any form of tourism-related enterprise and work is shaped by the broader institutional and discursive frameworks of tourism policy and tourism development in Namibia and internationally. In short, this is to say that tourism has all the hallmarks of a social and institutional endeavour that are central to the discussion of literacy from a social and ideological perspective. Because the context within which tourism in Namibia takes place is essentially shaped by asymmetrical relationships between its different actors, literacy's relation to power will again be a central theme in the next sections and the following chapters. As in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I will use Foucault's concept of discourse in order to illuminate the ideological meanings and the social power of different tourism literacies.

In his overview of tourism as a topic for anthropological research, Erve Chambers (2000) has emphasised the character of tourism as a mediated activity. While his argument is directed towards the role of human mediators in tourism, for example travel agents, tour operators, guides and waitresses, in this thesis I focus on the functions and status of written texts as mediating between tourists and hosts. These can be signs directing tourists to a particular place of interest, the identification badge of a tourist guide, a travel book or a tourism brochure. The way I look at these 'signs' is as parts of broader semiotic and ideological contexts and interests from which they derive their meanings.

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might be business-related. Alternatively, I speak of 'guests' and 'visitors', referring to tourists in the above broad sense.

Foregrounding mediation as a central practice of tourism drew my attention to the role of representations of culture in tourism, a central issue that I will explore in the coming chapters. Such representations shape and manipulate local and national culture and customs to serve the needs of the tourism industry (Knight 1997). In the case of Namibia, alongside culture, in particular ethnic culture, nature serves as a key attraction in the images of the country that are created for tourists. Literacy (and other semiotic systems, notably images) has a central role in the codification and dissemination of such representations. These, in turn, impact on local identities. As I recognise the influence of powerful images and discourses that undoubtedly structure many tourism literacy practices, I uncover the relationship between literacy, discourse and identity. Furthermore, I examine the role of local actors, CBTEs, communities and independent tourism workers in adapting to and changing such representations in order to suit their own interests (cf. Oakes 1998). This will bring me back to my earlier concerns with appropriation and dissent, as introduced in Chapter 5.

4. Introducing 'one of the most untamed and beautiful parts of wild Africa'[8]: tourism in Namibia

Although tourism was an important sector of the Namibian economy even prior to independence (Halbach 1999), its major boost came after 1990, when as a result of the final abolition of the apartheid structures, almost the entire territory of the country was opened to tourists. These changes concern in particular the communal areas, the former ethnic homelands. With the opening of the veterinary border, the 'red line' that separates the commercial farmlands from the communal areas, the discovery of 'ethnic' tourism (Vorläufer 1996; Chambers 2000) or 'indigenous tourism' (Smith 1996) in Namibia began. Side by side with nature- and eco-tourism (Wearing and

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[8] This is extracted from a Guardian advertisement for a 13-day tour to Namibia's Damaraland and Kaokoveld. The Guardian Weekend, January 20, 2001.

Larson 1996; Weaver 1998; Olindo 1997), the other mainstay of Namibia's tourism market, Namibia's ethnic populations moved to the centre of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990, 1995).

The Himba, a semi-nomadic group who live in Kaokoveld in the north-west, epitomise this fashion for indigenous tourism. Undoubtedly, they are the favourite subjects of Namibia's ethnic tourism industry. Because until today, they have maintained much of their supposedly traditional lifestyle, they evoke images of the 'noble savage' and the purity of life unpolluted by western capitalism and modern life. As the 'icons of traditional Africa' (Bollig 1997, quoted in Rothfuss 2000: 134), the Himba lend themselves ideally to the imagery of tourism marketing.

In recent years the tourism sector in Namibia has experienced significant growth. In 1991, 213,000 travellers visited Namibia. By the year 1997, this number had risen to an estimated 400,000 arrivals (Rothfuss 1998). The number of visitors to the country's nature reserves and resorts increased by 20% between 1993 and 1994 (Brits and Wiig 1998). Overall, however, the scale of tourism in Namibia remains low. Mass tourism has not yet reached the country, even if according to estimates by the National Planning Commission the total number of arrivals is expected to rise to 635,000 in 2002, 70% of which are assumed to be tourists (see Rothfuss 1998). With the exception of the country's primary tourist attractions such as the Etosha National Park, that can easily get crowded by the arriving minibuses and landrovers, visitor numbers in the rural areas are relatively low and peak only for a short period of the year. Rothfuss (2000) has estimated a total number of 9,000 tourists to Kaokoveld, the northern Kunene Region, in 1999. In July and August, the height of the tourist season, up to 15 vehicles per day (carrying an average of four to eight passengers) visit the Epupa Falls, one of the touristic highlights of Kaokoveld[9].

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[9] This figure is based on estimations by Rothfuss (2000) as well as my own observations during my stay at Epupa in August 2000.

In 1993, 60% of the tourists visiting Namibia came from South Africa and 11.7% from Germany (Brits and Wiig 1998). Other overseas visitors arrive from England, France and Italy. In addition to these foreign visitors, many Namibians themselves regularly visit different parts of their country[10].

The potential of tourism for the Namibian economy has been recognised by the government since 1991 (Butzin et al. 1998) and since then the industry has profited from a favourable policy environment[11]. In the government's perspective, the promotion of tourism is part of its policy of modernisation and economic growth. In 1995, the tourism industry had risen to become the third largest sector of the Namibian economy, contributing 5% to the Gross Domestic Product and 12% to foreign exchange earnings (Ashley 1995). Tourism is also a concern for international development aid to Namibia[12].

With the rise in tourist arrivals, the number of private tour operators and privately owned lodges has increased rapidly (Kainbacher 1997), an indication for the development of a functioning tourism industry. Many white landowners have turned to 'guest farming' as an additional income. At the same time, community-based tourism has been earmarked as a promising endeavour to support local and rural development. The government's policy to develop community-based tourism enterprises (CBTEs) and conservancies[13] in the

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[10] I was, however, unable to find any figures that would give an idea of the scope of domestic tourism in Namibia. For a recent volume on the phenomenon of 'native tourists' in developing countries, see Ghimire (2001).

[11] See for example the White Paper on Tourism from 1994 and the Five-Year-Plan for the development of tourism, 1993-1997, by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

[12] Support comes both from government organisations as well as from NGOs. OxfamCanada has supported community-based tourism in Namibia since 1996. Save the Rhino Trust actively supports wildlife conservation and tourism. The EU has commissioned a study into the potential of tourism development in Namibia (Hoff and Overgaard 1993). US-AID through its LIFE programme promotes nature conservation and local development efforts in Namibia.

[13] Conservancies are part of the government's 'Community-Based Natural Resource Management Programme' (CBNRM) that has been developed in an effort to allow rural communities to sustainably use and benefit from wildlife (MET 1995a, 1996).

communal areas is part of a strategy to develop new tourism products, notably nature tourism and ethnic tourism. These are expected to promote sustainable and community focussed development while preserving natural resources. The CBTE policy explicitly attempts to involve local communities, living on communal lands, in the tourism sector[14]. Namibia's community-based natural resource management programme and its environmental laws, that seek to protect the country's unique landscape and its fragile ecological set-up while promoting local development (MET 1995b, 1996), are regarded as one of the most progressive in the region. Tourism development through conservancies and CBTEs is a central pillar of this policy.

Overall, tourism policy in Namibia supports small scale upmarket tourism (Kainbacher 1997). While fly-in safaris and five star tent lodges in the desert are being favoured, this 'luxury' tourism is complemented by camping safaris, overland tours and self-organised travel groups who in most cases live on a more moderate budget. Among these groups of tourists, the interest in using community-based tourism facilities appears to be significant.

The arrival of tourism in developing countries is often regarded as an important factor in economic development, supporting the creation of new opportunities for local people (see for example De Kadt 1979). The advocates of tourism have emphasised tourism's importance for the economy[15]. The

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The main goal is to combine wildlife management, in relation to tourism development, with conventional land use (livestock husbandry).

[14] The policy to support local communities' efforts to get involved in tourism was already formulated in the White Paper on Tourism that was approved by Cabinet in April 1994 (MET 1994). It was later specified in the policies and legislation that led to the development of the CBRTM programme (MET 1995a and 1996).

[15] For a brief analysis of the tourism literature in terms of its different positions towards tourism see Eadington and Smith (1992) who summarise Jafari's earlier overview of different research perspectives on tourism. According to Jafari, the earlier studies of the 1960s and early 1970s tended to advocate in favour of tourism development, whereas more critical voices began to be heard in the late 1970s and 1980s. Nash (1996) and Chambers (2000) argue that tourism research has recently evolved from its earlier rather judgmental approach to a more knowledge-based and cautious approach.

amount of work generated may be substantial, if the scope of tourism itself is large, as for example in the Caribbean Islands (Pattullo 1996). In Namibia on the other hand, partly because tourism is relatively small scale, only a limited number of jobs are being created[16]. Many researchers are sceptical of the economic and social benefits local populations derive from tourism, as the development of tourism is often associated with the dominance of national and international enterprises and the leakage of benefits towards local and overseas elites (cf. Brohman 1996; Pattulo 1996).

It is important to look at the kind of work available and the employment conditions offered. The majority of opportunities are for unskilled, manual and low-paid work (cf. Hitchcock 1997; Bolles 1997). Tourism work is often seasonal and part-time and in most cases can only provide supplementary employment or income. The better paid managerial jobs are mostly given to foreigners or members of the urban elite. An often used argument against employing local people is their lack of formal education and training. Employers might find it more cost effective to bring in qualified staff from abroad rather than to train local people (Chambers 2000).

Namibia has a number of well trained tourism and hospitality workers, the overwhelming majority of whom are members of the country's white minority. It is an acknowledged fact that tourism in Namibia is a mainly white business and as such the sector reflects the hierarchies and inequalities inherited from the colonial and apartheid past. Apart from the government run national parks (which are in the process of being partly privatised) and the small sector of the CBTEs, the private tourism sector, i.e. hotels, lodges, guest-farms and tour operators, is firmly in the hand of the German-, Afrikaans- and English-speaking white Namibians (Rothfuss 2000). They own the land and property on which to develop a guest-farm or a hunting business. They either possess the capital necessary to invest in tourism or have access to credit and investment support. By comparison, independent tourism workers and

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16 See for example Rothfuss' (2000) estimates for Kaokoveld.

members of CBTEs often do not have easy access to capital, although many receive support from national and international NGOs.

As the above indicates, a highly unequal relationship between different stakeholders characterises the Namibian tourism sector. Many of Namibia's natural and cultural attractions are located in the communal areas and private tour operators and companies make part of their income from touring these areas. By contrast, only 10% of all tourism facilities are located in the communal areas, the main part of the industry being concentrated in the commercial white-owned farmlands (Rothfuss 1998). No clear and legally binding regulations exist regarding the redistribution of income gained by private tour operators and lodges to local communities living on communal lands. However, the new CBRTM policy stipulates that conservancies have the concession rights over lodge developments and tour operations within the area of the conservancy. They can lease these to private operators (MET 1995a and c). Despite these changes, the operation of private lodges and concessions on communal land remains a sensitive issue that touches upon questions of land user rights and local development[17]. These are particularly salient issues, because of the current legal situation that prevents local communities or individuals in communal areas from private land ownership.

What empowers or disempowers actors in this context is access to economic as well as to cultural capital. Not surprisingly, the new conservancy policy emphasises the need for local communities to acquire business and communication skills (MET 1995c; Ashley 1995). Training for local communities is regarded as a crucial factor in the success of local tourism enterprises (Ashley 1995).

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[17] Before independence, the state had controlled and managed wildlife in communal and commercial areas. In 1967, however, commercial farmers, but not communal area farmers (farmers living in the then homelands), were given conditional rights to use game on their farms. From 1971 onwards, commercial farms could form conservancies. In 1996, the former wildlife legislation was amended to allow for the establishment of conservancies in communal areas.

Many of the younger tourism workers whom I met had a relatively high level of formal education. However, as they explained in interviews, they lacked the more specific knowledge and 'know-how' needed in order to satisfy the tourist's expectations[18]. In this and the following chapters, I argue that knowledge of specific literacy and discourse practices is particularly important for community-based tourism enterprises who are forced to compete with private investors and tour companies.

In 1995, the Namibian Community-Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA), an umbrella organisation for CBTEs, was founded. From the onset, its purpose was to support local communities in their struggle to improve their position within the local tourism market and vis-à-vis the private national and international tourism actors that operate in Namibia. In this capacity, NACOBTA as well as other national NGOs play an important role in providing training, institutional support and marketing for CBTEs. These NGOs act as intermediaries between local CBTEs, ministerial offices, donors, training institutions and private tour operators.

5. Guestbooks, price tags and cash books: reading and writing practices of tourism workers

In the literature on tourism development in the so-called Third World (as in tourism areas of the 'First World'), the relationship between growing tourism and social change accompanied by new economic, social and cultural practices is generally acknowledged (see for example Nash 1996; Chambers 2000). Many of the earlier studies on tourism by social anthropologists concluded that the presence of tourists by and large negatively influences local culture and local forms of social life (cf. Crick 1989; Smith 1989). Following from this, anthropologists have emphasised the significant power differences between the various actors involved in tourism and some have

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[18] Interview with Face-to-Face Tours, Katutura, 1.6.2000, interview conducted in English.

seen in tourism a form of imperialism (Crick 1989). However more recent studies have relativised this negative picture and point to the possible revival of local traditions and the diversification of income and employment opportunities due to the increased presence of tourists with their diverse needs and expectations (Kamsma and Bras 1999).

In Namibia, despite the undoubted influence of private and international tourism businesses that account for a large part of the income derived from tourism, a number of local enterprises have been developed in response to tourism. As such new economic opportunities emerge, local people acquire new social and economic practices which often include unfamiliar literacy practices. Many of these activities require the use of written texts and documents that fulfil a range of functions, the most important perhaps being advertising and information. Other texts have legal and organisational functions. Furthermore, tourism work requires business-related literacy and numeracy practices, such as accounting, budgeting and pricing.

The tourism related occupations that were part of my study are crafts vendors, local tour guides, members of community-based camp sites and people working in 'museum villages'. On the following pages, I present some of the informants with whom I worked in Namibia and introduce the literacy practices they engaged with.

1. Craft vendors: Martha

Tourists love souvenirs and for many, buying a basket or a wooden figurine means taking back home a piece of the culture they have visited. In the hands of the visitors, the material objects bought turn into visible and tangible symbols of the other whose culture and life they have come to know as part of their tourist experience (cf. Duggan 1997). Crafts are a typical example of how tourism objectifies and commodifies local culture (Greenwood 1989). Literacy, I argue, plays an important role in this process. Flyers and brochures, distributed in Windhoek's 'Crafts Centre', the biggest and most professionally

marketed arts and crafts outlet in the country, explain to the interested visitor the significance of specific material objects. Name tags inform not only on the indigenous name of an object or a sculpture, but may also contain information on the place of origin and its producer. The Crafts Centre, located in the centre of Windhoek, close to the City's shopping malls and big hotels, markets Namibian crafts as 'authentic' local productions. Next to local pottery and recycling arts the 'Crafts Café' offers 'home-made goodies'.

The Crafts Centre is however not the place where tourists are likely to meet local producers and local sellers. These can be found at several places in the city centre, notably on 'Post Street', the busiest street mall in town, and near 'Grab-a-Phone', the main tourist information centre and pick up point for tours, taxis and coaches to the coast and to South Africa.

Martha, a 55-year-old woman from Ovamboland, sold crafts on Post Street. Martha was one of my main informants. Although she went to school for seven years only and was not taught any English, she spoke the language fluently and confidently. The first time I consciously noticed her among all the other craft vendors on Post Street was when I saw her writing price tags and sticking them on her pots and baskets. She used small adhesive labels that she had bought in a stationery shop. Although craft vendors usually appeared to be happy to bargain with their clients, it was common for the sellers in Windhoek to price their items. However, contrary to Martha, many did not use new labels, but used pieces of old paper and cardboard as price tags. Others used 'recycled' price tags from supermarket goods.

Martha used several note books to keep track of her income and expenses. Each time she sold an item, she wrote down the name and the price she received in her 'income book'. At the end of the day, she added up the sums. At home, she kept another book for her expenses. Here, she wrote down how much money she had paid for the crafts she bought, the salary she paid the young man who helped her carrying her goods from the storage room at the back of the mall to her selling place, her own expenses for food and the rent she paid for her place (see next page *Figure 7.1*).

Figure 7.1: Martha and her income book

Pricing may appear to be a straightforward literacy and numeracy practice. However, as I learned from Martha, there is more to it than writing a number on a label. Martha was an active member of the Okutumbatumba Hawkers Association, an organisation of local vendors in Katutura and Windhoek. As a member of the association, she participated in various short-term training courses, for example on food safety and book-keeping. When she still worked as a food vendor in Katutura, she attended a course on pricing. In this course, she learned how to calculate her expenses and how to set the price, so as to guarantee a minimum profit. Prior to attending the course, as she learned then, she had sold her cakes too cheaply[19]. As a craft vendor in Post Street, she still accepted a bargain, but she had now learned how to calculate her profit margin.

Pricing is a revealing case to illustrate the difference between what is shown at the 'surface' of a literacy or a numeracy event and what are its underlying features and rules. What was visible to me first was only Martha's activity of writing figures on labels. But there is much more involved in the

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[19] Interview with Martha, 5.8.00, interview conducted in English. For a similar example of the importance of pricing for a small factory co-operative in Nicaragua see Lanksheer (1997).

literacy practice of pricing, namely Martha's knowledge of her expenses, her ability to calculate the profit and the decisions that make her set a specific price. Other important factors are the high competition among craft vendors in central Windhoek, the high living costs in the capital, the fact that as an elderly woman Martha had to employ a young man to help her carry her crafts and her daily expenses for travelling from her home in Katutura to the city centre by taxi.

The reason I emphasise the difference between the visible aspects of a literacy event and its underlying features is because these social aspects are often neglected in a functional approach to literacy. I made a similar argument in Chapter 5, when discussing the teaching of bureaucratic literacies in the NLPN. As I argued then, a functional literacy programme often only addresses the technical aspects of literacy practices, i.e. it teaches its participants what words are to be written in the spaces of an administrative form. Martha's example shows that if pricing was to be taught in a course on tourism literacies, besides the instrumental aspects of how to calculate income and expenses, much more would have to be addressed, for example the particular constraints and difficulties Martha faced as a crafts vendor.

2. Local tour guides: Face-to-Face Tours

Israel, Philadelphia and Cecilia were a group of local tour guides who took tourists through Katutura, the former black township of Windhoek. In early summer 1999, they formed a small tour business, called 'Face-to-Face Tours', a name inspired by a tour guiding enterprise in Soweto in Johannesburg. Their main advertising means was a flyer that was distributed at prominent locations in Windhoek, at Grab-a-Phone and at the Crafts Centre. The group exemplifies the fate of many young school leavers in Katutura. Although they had all been to secondary school, they could not find a job.

Apart from the use of the flyer, the group's work demanded relatively little reading and writing. Cecilia, the group's administrator, was responsible for

answering the phone and writing down reservations. She explained to me how when they first started, she had to learn to ask clients on the phone to spell their names and addresses. As part of the service, Face-to-Face Tours met their clients at their hotel or guest house. Therefore it was essential for Cecilia to correctly write down the address where the guides have to pick up the tourists. Cecilia used a handdrawn spreadsheet to keep track of the group's income and expenses.

During one of my visits to the group, I asked how they had developed their tours and what sources of information on Katutura they used. I also asked whether they had ever written down any of their tour plans. The group had collected information from various sources, including what they remembered from their own history lessons in school. Similarly, local guides at the Brandberg in the north-central area of Namibia, had used schoolbooks to learn about the history of the Brandberg and its famous rock-paintings. Like Philadelphia and Israel, they had not written down what they had found, but had learned everything by heart[20].

3. Crafts Centres: Dhaureb Crafts

As the manager of a community-based tourism enterprise, the Dhaureb Crafts Centre in Uis, Elizabeth, had to fulfil a number of responsibilities. Dhaureb was founded by a group of local women who together produced and sold crafts in Uis, a small run down town that once profited from a nearby tin mine. Since the mine was closed in 1991, employment opportunities in Uis had become scarce and most families had found it extremely difficult to make a living. For those who work in Dhaureb, the crafts centre provided their only source of income.

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[20] Interview with Brandberg Mountain Guides, 25.6.2000, interview conducted in English.

Elizabeth made crafts, she bought materials for the group, she was responsible for keeping record of expenses and income and she divided their profit between the group's members. She also had to ensure regular communication with the Rössing Foundation in Windhoek, the group's main supporter. Rössing provided training and business support, advanced credit, bought materials for the women and marketed their products through the crafts centre in Windhoek and private lodges in the country[21]. Although Dhaureb had a telephone, Elizabeth regularly wrote to Rössing. With her customers, Elizabeth spoke English, but she wrote to Rössing in Afrikaans (see *Figures 7.2* and *7.3*).

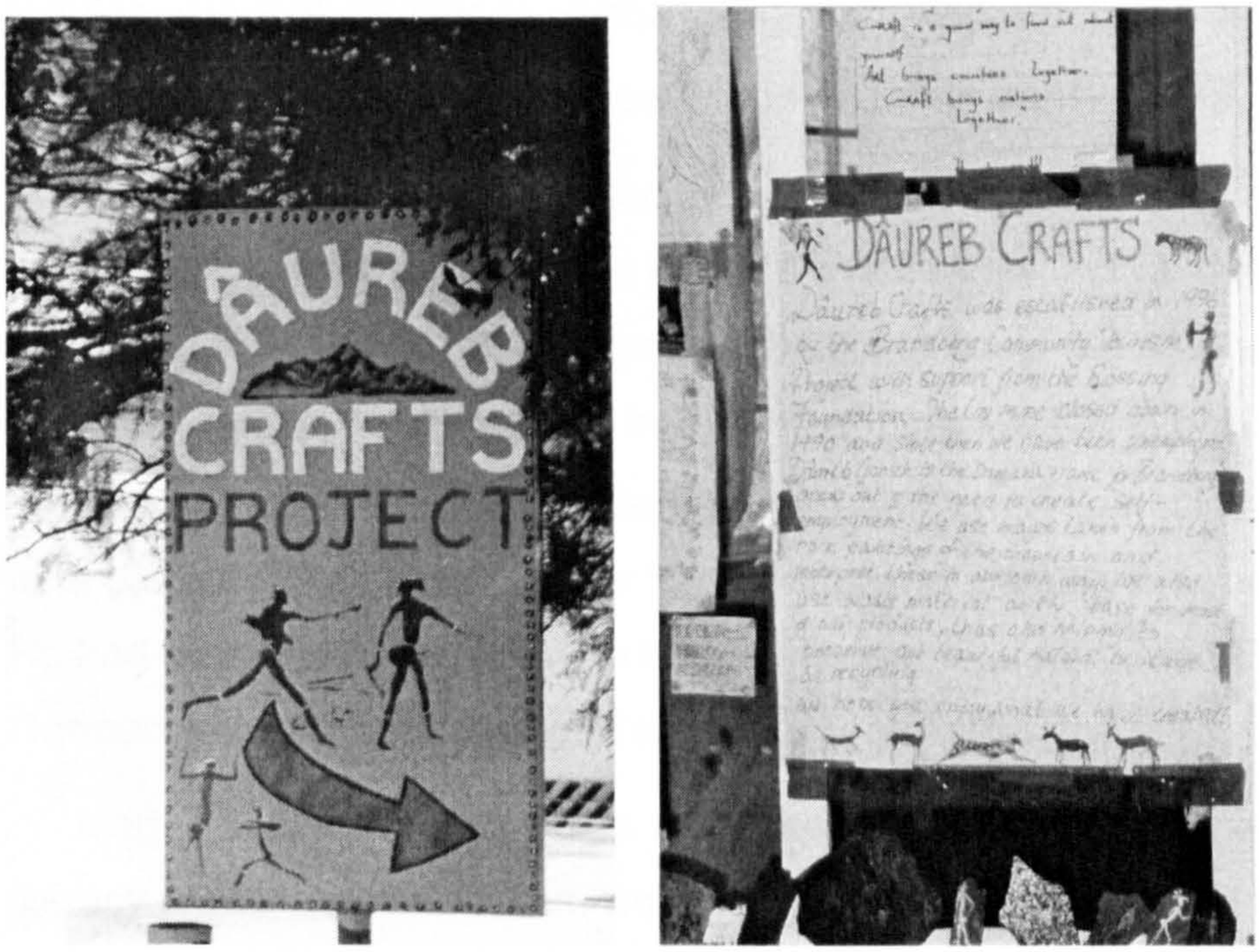

Figure 7.2: Signpost outside the craft centre

Figure 7.3: Literacy practices in the crafts centre

As some of the above examples have already indicated, to a large extent, tourism workers and those employed in tourism enterprises acquired the literacy skills they used through informal and on the spot learning (cf. ter

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21 Interview with K. LeRoux, Rössing Foundation, Windhoek, 22.7.2000.

Steege, Stam and Bras 1999). Local guides relied on school books and travel guides, some of which they received from private tour operators or tourists (cf. Crick 1994). Before the 'Anmire Traditional Village' in northern Damaraland was set up, its founder, Magdalena, conducted what she called a 'research' among the older people in the community, to find out about local customs, medicinal knowledge and the history of the Damara people[22]. At the Waterberg, one of Namibia's national game parks, while climbing up to the top of the mountain, I met a guide who took tourists on wildlife walks. While he was waiting for clients, he read a book on the fauna and flora of Southern Africa. He learned the scientific names of plants and animals. In Epupa, John, a guide who took tourists to Himba villages, carried with him a small note book, in which he wrote down new words and their translation[23].

Much of the language skills local tour guides and local tourism workers possessed were acquired on the job. At Twyfelfontein, our guide was Joseph, 52 years old, who had never been to school and could not read and write. However, he conversed fluently in English and, as we found out by coincidence, could also speak German and Afrikaans[24]. Crucially, for his job as a guide, he was able to name local plants and animals in three languages. He had learned Afrikaans, when he had worked on a farm, and English and German while working as a guide.

Martha's, Israel's, Elizabeth's and Joseph's work illustrate the kind of literacy practices local tourism workers in Namibia are involved in. In the following two chapters, I will take a much closer look at some of these local

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22 Fieldnotes, Anmire, 7.8.2000.

23 Fieldnotes, Epupa, 13.8.2000.

24 I was accompanied on this tour by my husband. At the beginning of the tour, we both spoke English with Joseph. At one point, my husband and I exchanged a few words in German, our first language, and were surprised to find out that Joseph had understood our conversation. From then on, he continued to address us in English, while occasionally switching to German.

tourism literacies and discuss their role in relation to the literacy practices and structures of the private tourism sector and the world-wide tourism industry.

8. SIGNPOSTS, FLYERS AND BROCHURES: PROMOTIONAL LITERACY PRACTICES

1. Introduction: 'Kunene Village Rest Camp – The gateway to the living Epupa Falls'[1]

In this chapter, I discuss a group of literacy practices that occupy a central place in tourism. These are what I call 'promotional tourism literacy practices', for example brochures, flyers and signboards. As in previous chapters, I will focus on the way these literacy practices are located in specific discourses – in this case 'tourism discourses' (Thurot and Thurot 1983; Lindknud 1998) – and in the power relationships that characterise tourism in Namibia. Furthermore, I will examine how tourism brochures and flyers, as they depict local people and local cultures in specific ways, construct and disseminate local identities. Finally, I will ask how local tourism workers and CBTEs react to these 'imposed identities' (Collins and Blot, forthcoming) and how they take up the promotional literacy practices of tourism. Before I discuss some of these discourses and practices, I will briefly turn to my own position in the field and to the similarities between the tourist's and the anthropologist's gaze.

2. Tourist or fieldworker? Familiar perceptions and the question of my own 'gaze'

While I conducted fieldwork on tourism and literacy, I could not fail to be aware of the similarities between the anthropologist's and the tourist's role.

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[1] This is written on a signpost that guides tourists to the Kunene Village Restcamp in Opuwo, Kaokoveld.

Crick, an anthropologist who worked on tourism in Sri Lanka, compares the role of anthropologists in the field with that of tourists. He argues that 'anthropologists and tourists are partly overlapping identities' (Crick 1994: 10). He explains that both the tourist and the anthropologist develop relationships with local people 'in order to access whatever they wish to obtain from the other culture' (ibid.:10). While tourists usually rely on guides, anthropologists rely on interpreters, research assistants and informants.

Undoubtedly, anthropologists and tourists share an interest in other cultures, even if the degree of their interest may vary considerably. As a fieldworker who researched tourism my own position necessarily overlapped with my activities as a tourist. Initially, I addressed all my informants as a tourist and, in many ways, throughout my contact with them, I remained attached to this role. One of my informants, a guide at the 'Kaoko Information Centre' in Opuwo even told me, that in his view anthropologists are nothing but a specific category of tourists[2]! My fate, then, was similar to Crick's. Re-examining his fieldwork in Sri Lanka, he notes that, despite his attempts to explain to his informants the specific nature of his ethnography, for them he remained a tourist. He adds that what roles the anthropologist takes on in the field is not necessarily a matter of choice, but depends on 'what "they" will let you be' (Crick 1994:11)

As a participant observer, I always used the services of the tourism workers who were my informants. This confirmed my role in the encounter. Acting like a tourist, I also wished to support my informants' businesses and give some kind of reward for the time they spent with me. Thus, invariably, interviews and participant observation were structured by the identities of client and guide or vendor. Only in two cases, with Face-to-Face Tours and with Martha, my relationship seemed to have taken a different turn, as my contacts with them intensified and evolved over several months. After our first meeting which began with me as their client, I offered Face-to-Face Tours

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[2] Fieldnotes, Opuwo, 10.8.2000.

support with some of the tasks related to their business. As a result I got involved in their activities, a role that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 9. In Martha's case, no such collaboration developed, but over the course of my repeated visits, our contact intensified. With Face-to-Face Tours and to a lesser degree with Martha, the more I got to know them, the more my roles shifted from observer towards participant.

My situation reveals the impossibility of the fieldworker to achieve the status of ethnographer, the 'professional stranger' (Agar 1999) in a pure form. What roles s/he is assigned in the field always remains in part beyond the control of the researcher and it is perhaps best to assume that one's identity in the field will always be multiple.

The host/guest or the customer/service worker relationship undeniably profited my attempts to seek information from guides and vendors. The tour guides were all used to being asked many questions and they volunteered answers and insights. Because the majority of them were proficient in English, I rarely had to engender the services of an interpreter. On the other hand, it was obvious that the status I had as a client influenced how they behaved towards me.

The interview situation was further shaped by the social structures in which it was embedded and of which both I and my interview partners were part. These, however, extended much beyond the immediate context of my visits to a museum village, my stay on a campsite or my tour to the rock paintings. It has been noted earlier that tourism is seen by many as a 'neo-colonial' endeavour (Davis, quoted in Crick 1994: 7). In Namibia, it is impossible to deny that tourism work and the host/guest encounter perpetuates aspects of the formerly colonised to their returned colonisers. Quite obviously, in Namibia, as in other countries this is primarily a racial issue (for example in the Caribbean, cf. Pattulo 1996). Many black domestic workers in Windhoek still spend their days in the houses of their white employers. Others have moved on from tidying up private living rooms to cleaning hotel bathrooms. To what extent my own background, as a female

and a white European influenced the way my Namibian informants behaved towards me, is a matter I can only speculate about. What is certain, though, is that our respective origins shaped our encounters.

3. Promotional tourism literacy practices

In a chapter entitled 'Globalisation and Modernity', Lash and Urry put forward the view that the frequency and normality of travel characterising modern and post-modern societies is associated with the 'proliferation of images and symbols' (Lash and Urry 1994: 256). These are part and parcel of new literacy practices that proliferate with the spread of tourism. Particularly important are tourism brochures, signposts and travel guides. Characteristically, these texts rely on a set of images and linguistic features that have become increasingly uniform and are familiar aspects of communicative practices world-wide. With increased travel by Europeans and North Americans to countries in the South, they are exported to the host populations.

The kind of discourses and literacy practices that are spread with the world-wide movements of tourists and travellers are characterised by images and symbols that turn a place into a tourist destination (Chambers 2000). In most cases, they rely on a combination of text and picture. Dann has noted that tourism brochures, which in his words are 'combinations of textual and visual/sensual media', are the most important source of promotional material destined for tourists (Dann 1996: 156).

In Namibia, I was struck by the abundance of tourism brochures, leaflets, posters, magazines and guidebooks that could be found everywhere. They were displayed in the lounges of lodges, guest houses and hotels, in the tourism information offices, in restaurants and on campsites. In Windhoek and while travelling through the country, I observed tourists picking up leaflets, reading brochures, studying posters and leafing through magazines. Almost all of the community-based tourism enterprises that I visited had a promotional leaflet or brochure.

Many of the images Lash and Urry refer to relate to the aesthetic appreciation of landscapes, culture and history and the creation of what they call 'place-myths' (Lash and Urry 1994: 265). Such place-myths play a central role in tourism promotion. Tourists come to Namibia because of the images of unspoiled nature and spectacular wildlife they find in the tourist brochures and advertisements of tour companies. In addition, as my earlier example of the Himba has shown, 'people-myths' figure prominently in Namibian tourism.

Signposts, that include texts and images, guide the travellers' movements and their perceptions of the places visited. They are central to both the creation and dissemination of tourist images and to the facilitation of travel and movement inside a foreign country. Tourists depend on signs and signposts to find their way to places of interest and overnight accommodation. They rely on guide books and brochures to decide where to stay and what to visit. By doing so, they put their faith in the tourism experts whose skilfully fabricated signposts and signboards, brochures and texts are designed to attract the foreign visitors to various tourism businesses. These tourism literacy practices are a major factor in the success or failure of a tourism enterprise. As I will show in the coming sections, they require extensive knowledge of tourists' wishes and expectations and mastery of the art of creating successful place- and people-myths.

Signposts direct travellers to game parks and nature reserves, inform of their opening hours, the tariffs to be paid and in some cases even provide information on the kind of animals tourists may be lucky to see. Other signposts guide the traveller to a guest farm, a lodge, a campsite or a traditional village[3]. Such 'on-sight markers' (MacCannel 1999) announce the name of a CBTE and describe the facilities offered. They are essential for the travellers' information and orientation in a country whose inhabitants' language(s) they normally do not speak (see *Figure 8.1*).

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[3] On the importance of signs for travellers' movements see also Peeters, Urru and Dahles (1999).

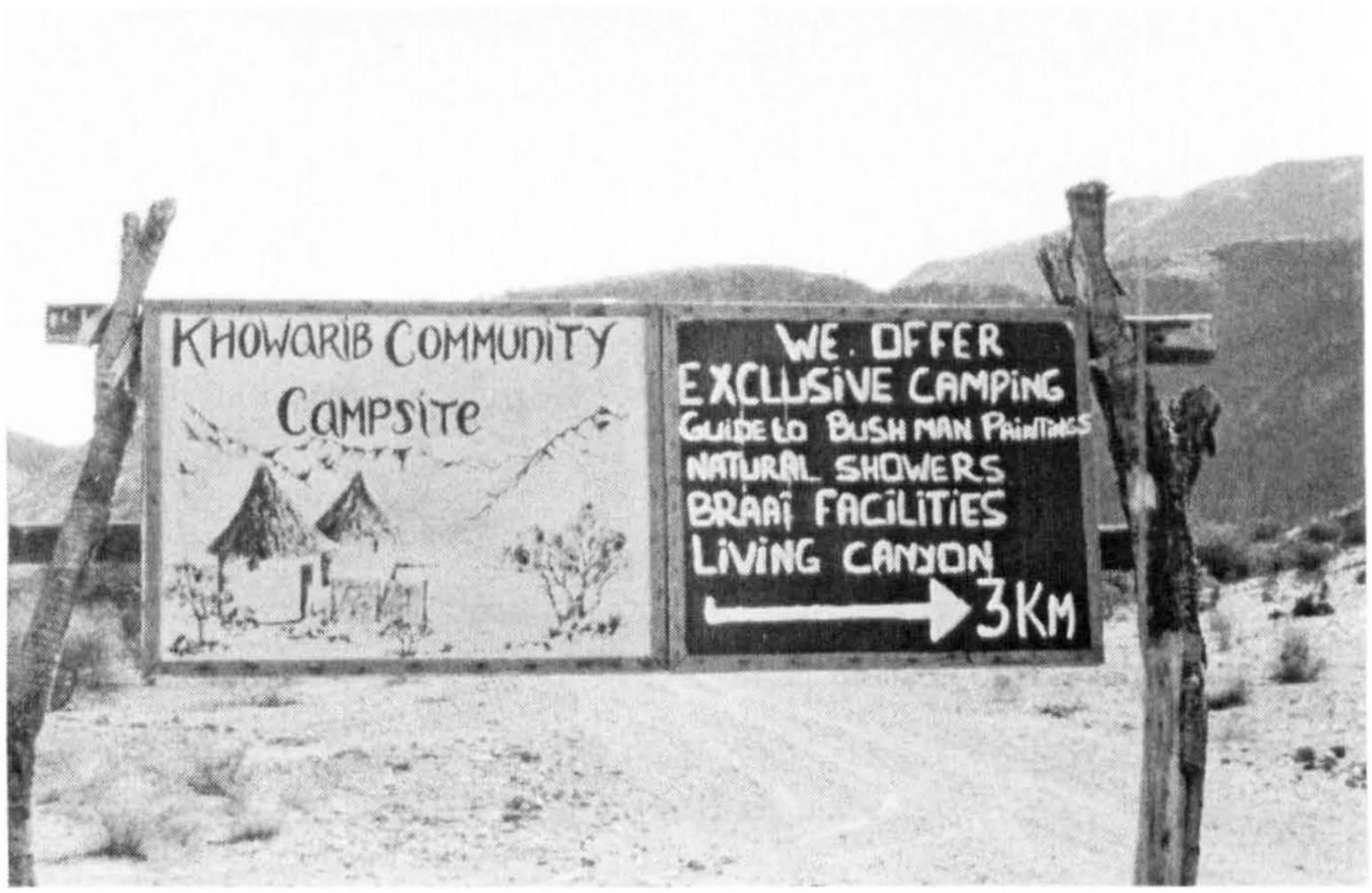

Figure 8.1: Signpost for the Khowarib Community Campsite

While travelling through Kavango, Caprivi and Damaraland, I took photographs of signposts and signboards along the road. They had been put up by individuals to attract travellers to their businesses. As the figures below show, these signposts testify to the inventiveness and skilfulness with which local communities create appealing tourism texts (see next page *Figures 8.2* and *8.3*).

Figure 8.2: Signboard in Kaokoveld

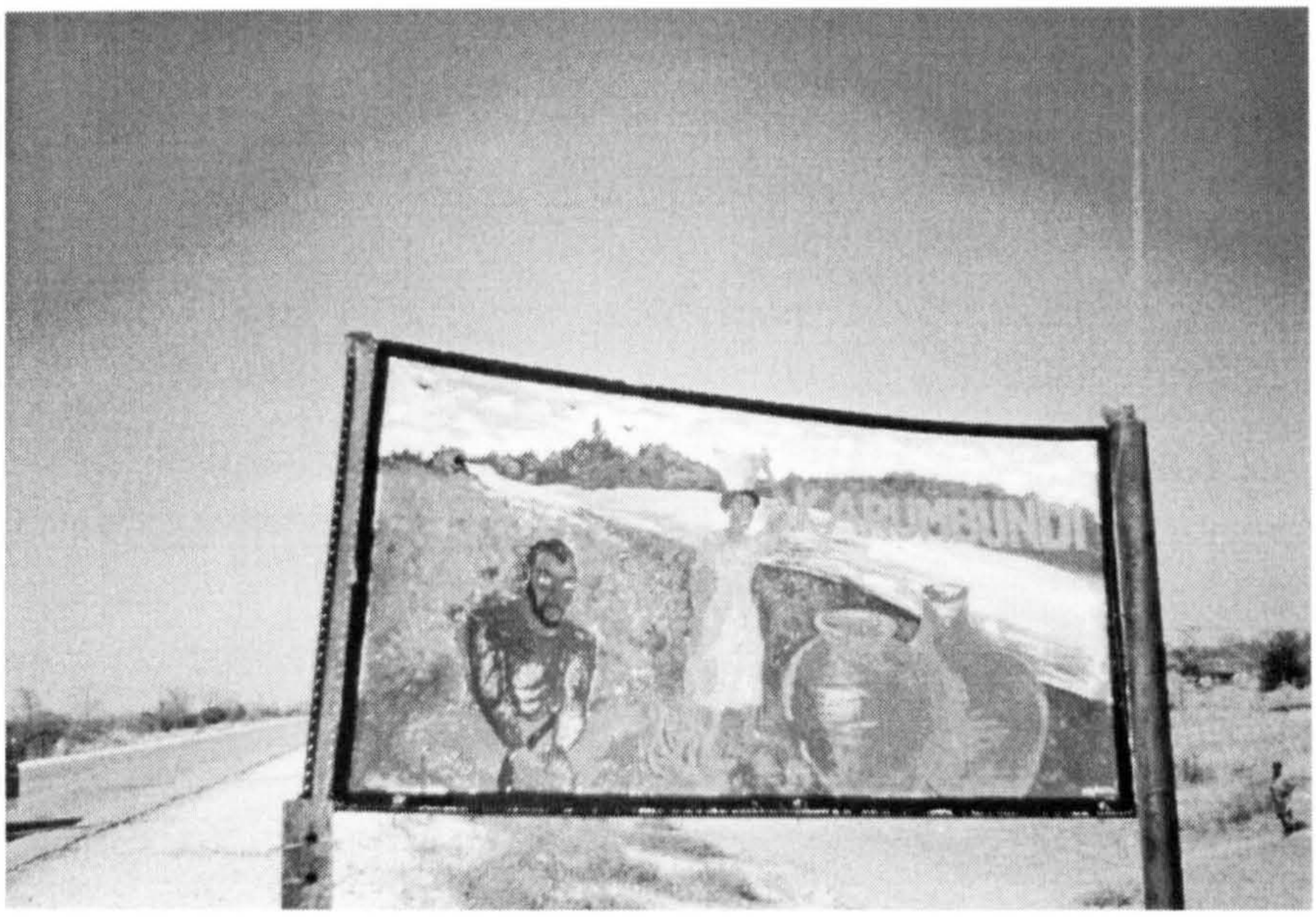

Figure 8.3: Signboard in Kavango

For the tourist who travels through Namibia, it is not unusual to drive for hours without seeing any people or villages along the road. Signposting is particularly important for the CBTEs which are often located in remote areas and difficult to access. Without an attractive signpost and clear indications how to reach the destination, it is unlikely that any tourists will make the effort to find the CBTE. This is made more important by the fact that even in the communal areas CBTEs may have to compete with private enterprises, many of which also have the means to put up bigger, more colourful and more attractive signposts (see *Figure 8.4*).

Figure 8.4: Signboard of a private lodge

Because of the sheer volume of their presence in tourism and their essential function as marketing devices, travel guides, brochures, flyers, leaflets and signposts are a core category of tourism literacy practices. In many contexts, they are more important for communication between visitors and locals than direct oral exchange between hosts and guests which often remains limited to a few brief encounters.

Signboards, leaflets and guide books are however not the only literacy practices of tourism. Other examples are receipts, booking reservations, entrance tickets or restaurant menus. This group of tourism literacy practices is essential for the social and administrative organisation of travel and tourism.

In this section I made two claims. First, I suggested that tourism relies on a range of promotional literacy practices that are essential to the creation of appealing tourism images. These images contribute to the success or failure of any tourism enterprise. Small-scale local businesses and community-based ventures are not excluded from the pressure to set up effective marketing strategies and thus make extensive use of literacy for the purpose of advertising. Second, I argued that one of the effects of tourism in Namibia is the increased presence of such literacy practices in communal and rural

areas. Many of these, although not specific to tourism, but also being common in trade and business, may nevertheless be unfamiliar to local people. As local people interact with tourists and become involved in tourism-related business activities, they take up such tourism literacy practices.

4. Images of culture and nature: understanding the tourist gaze and handling the politics of representation

I didn't even know what tourism is![4]

The above statement by Israel, the founder of Face-to-Face Tours, sums up some of the difficulties local people face when setting out to engage in tourism. As Philadelphia, another member of the group, explained, when they started the tours, they lacked knowledge of who tourists are, what they do and what they want. How to handle the tourists, she added and knowing what their expectations were, were the biggest challenges for them. Another difficulty was to overcome their shyness in speaking English with their white clients. Their school English was not of much help, what they needed was to understand and be conversant in the 'language of tourism' (Dann 1996) and its underpinning discourses. But what characterises this language of tourism?

When they went on their first tours, the guides from Face-to-Face Tours did not know what their clients would want to see. In fact, living in Katutura themselves, they wondered what was so fascinating about it. But they slowly began to gain an understanding of some of the driving forces behind the 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990, 1995): the discourses of otherness and authenticity. For the tourists, ordinary life in Katutura was fascinating, as long as it appeared to be 'real' and to be different from their own life at home. 'Experience Katutura face-to-face', the flyer the group later produced with the help of a friend, addresses precisely these desires (see next page *Figure 8.5*). While it places strong emphasis on the political history of Katutura (and

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[4] Israel, Face-to-Face Tours, Interview, 1.6.2000.

appeals to many tourists' interest in Namibia's colonial past), it responds to the visitors' desire to see the 'real' Namibia, i.e. to get a glimpse of contemporary life in a black township. The group's logo, a black and a white head facing each other, takes up the message of the tourist's fascination with the racial other.

Figure 8.5: Flyer, Face-to-Face Tours

Writing and designing a tourism flyer or brochure is not primarily a matter of mastering English grammar and knowing 'school literacy'. Such documents are the outcomes of highly situated literacy practices. The brochure is an example of a specific genre: advertising. The text reflects the extensive knowledge its writer had of the images and metaphors that frame the tourists' views of Namibia. It skilfully appeals to some of the growing trends in Namibian tourism: many tourists' interest in 'indigenous life' and their fascination with the 'primitive' (Nash 1995) and the 'exotic' (Albers and James 1983). In response to the tourists' wish to experience 'authentic' life (MacCannel 1999), Face-to-Face Tours offer visits to the markets and local bars of Katutura and to the homestead of Hilde Shifidi whose father was murdered during the anti-apartheid struggle. At the same time, the flyer addresses the various other interests that bring tourists to Namibia, notably their desire to see the country's wild animals. By doing so, the group tried to attract a large clientele.

The example of the guides in Katutura shows, that local tourism workers need to understand and to use the 'discourses' of tourism (Thurot and Thurot 1983; Lindknud 1998), e.g. the images of local culture and local life that appeal to the guests. Following Lindknud (1998), I define tourism discourses as a set of expressions, words and behaviour that describe a place and its inhabitants. The central characteristic of a tourism discourse is that it turns a place or a site into a destination, or a tourist attraction (ibid.; Chambers 2000). As they seek to depict local people and local culture in ways that appeal to the tourist gaze, tourism discourses objectify nature and culture. Aspects of the setting or the culture are manipulated into symbols and social signs.

In order to produce their flyer, Face-to-Face Tours needed to know what tourists want and how they look at a place. In other words, they needed to be aware of the discourses that shape their visitors' gaze and had to command the right linguistic and semiotic devices to translate these into an appealing text. It is precisely these skills that some tourism workers struggled with.

Despite knowing 'school English', they felt they lacked competence in the registers and discourses of tourism talk and tourism writing[5].

Guides, such as Israel and Philadelphia have to be mediators and cultural brokers (cf. Cohen 1985). They need high level interpretive and communicative skills and cross-discursive understanding. But they also need to have the ability to commoditise their discourse skills, so as to guarantee the success of their businesses (cf. ter Steege, Stam and Bras 1999).

Tourism discourses are therefore essential to understanding the nature of tourism literacy practices. To know tourism discourses entails the ability to use the language of tourism in order to manipulate and to meet the tourist's expectations in a way that satisfies their demands, calms their anxieties and creates a semiotic ground on which hosts and guests can meet. A specific tourism literacy practice, such as a promotional flyer, derives its meaning from various tourism discourses. Accordingly, tourism literacy practices need to be understood within tourism discourses.

5. 'Anmire Damara Cultural Village': how a community-based tourism enterprise presents itself

The tourism industry in Namibia makes use of a range of tourism discourses. CBTEs take part in these 'politics of representation' (Chambers 2000) whose ultimate aim of course is to attract as many tourists as possible and to successfully compete with other providers in a tourism market that is shaped by severe competition and high levels of inequality. However, CBTEs often find themselves in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the private tour operators and lodge owners. They are disadvantaged in terms of access to advertising and marketing strategies and lack the financial means to produce high-quality promotional material.

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5 Interview with Face-to-Face Tours, 1.6.2000

Despite the above difficulties, the community-based tourism enterprises that I worked with in my study produced their own versions of tourism discourses, appealing in particular to the group of tourists who are most likely to be interested in this form of 'alternative' tourism[6]. With the support of donors, NGOs and friends, they produce leaflets, brochures and signboards that respond to the tourists' interest in local culture and their desire to experience a holiday 'close to nature'. As an umbrella organisation for CBTEs, NACOBTA provides advertising and marketing support to local tourism enterprises.

The 'Anmire Damara Cultural Village', a museum village in the former Damara homeland, is a member of NACOBTA. It is run by a group of local people from the nearby Khowarib community. Anmire, founded by Monica, a local woman, is supported by a Namibian NGO, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) and by Raleigh International. The IRDNC and Raleigh International helped Anmire with funding, training, the construction of the village and the production of a leaflet for visitors. At Anmire, the tourists are received by a group of guides who show the visitors around the village, while explaining and staging different cultural events and customs. In typical museum fashion, this untypical outdoor museum is rich in literacy practices that guide and inform the visitor. Signposts lead the visitor from one hut to another (see next page *Figure 8.6*). In one of the huts, medicinal plants and herbs are displayed. Handwritten labels indicate for the visitor the names of the plants. The visitor receives a leaflet with information on the museum village and the different houses, activities and dances to watch. This leaflet also contains a short history of the Damara people and a list of Nama/Damara[7] words for the tourists to learn. On leaving the village,

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[6] For a theoretical discussion of alternative forms of tourism see Smith and Eadington (1992). Their volume also contains several case studies.

[7] Nama/Damara is the colloquial term for Khoekhoegowab, the language spoken by both the Nama and the Damara people.

the tourists can buy handmade crafts, each item carrying a small handwritten label that tells its price and the name of its producer.

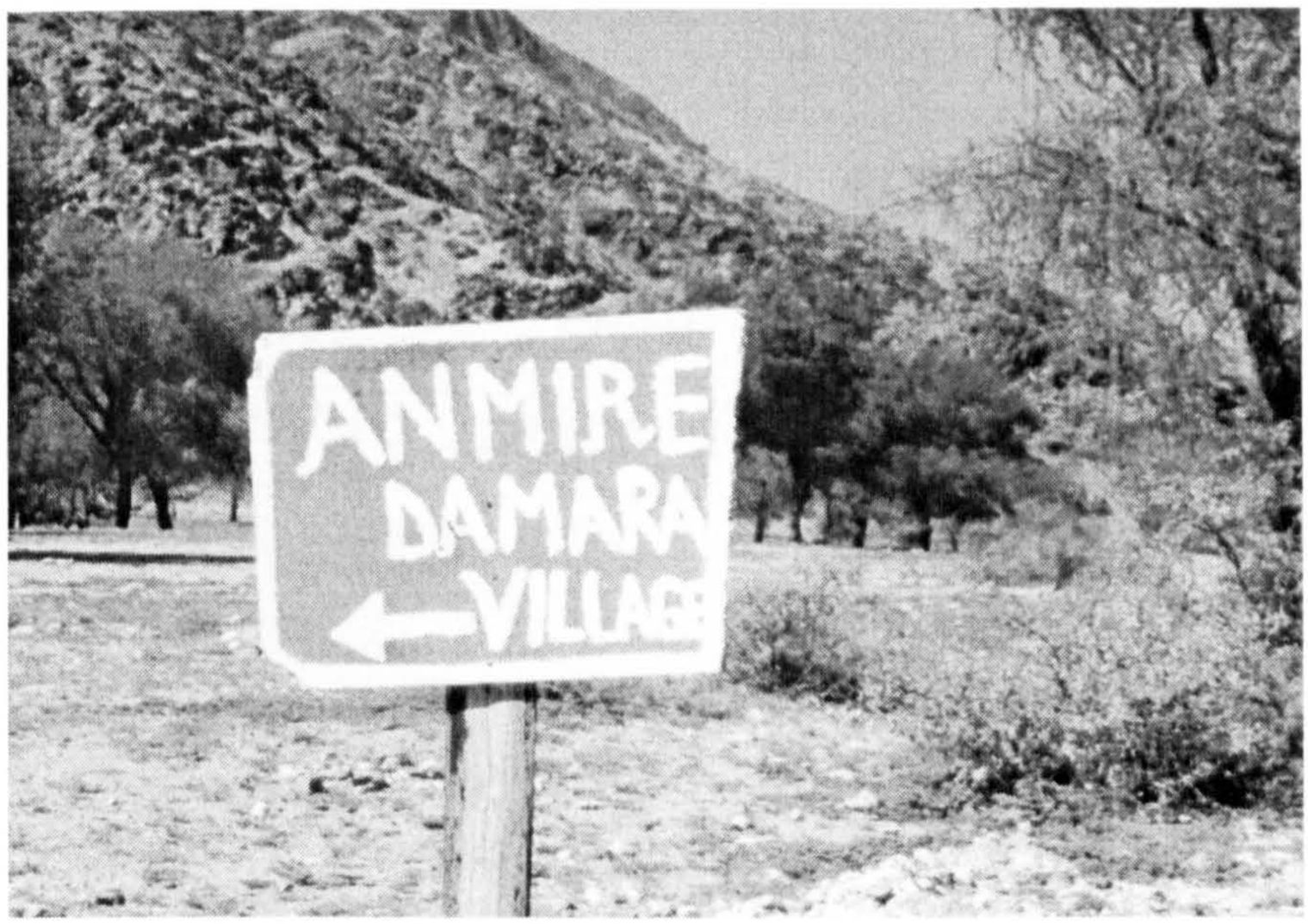
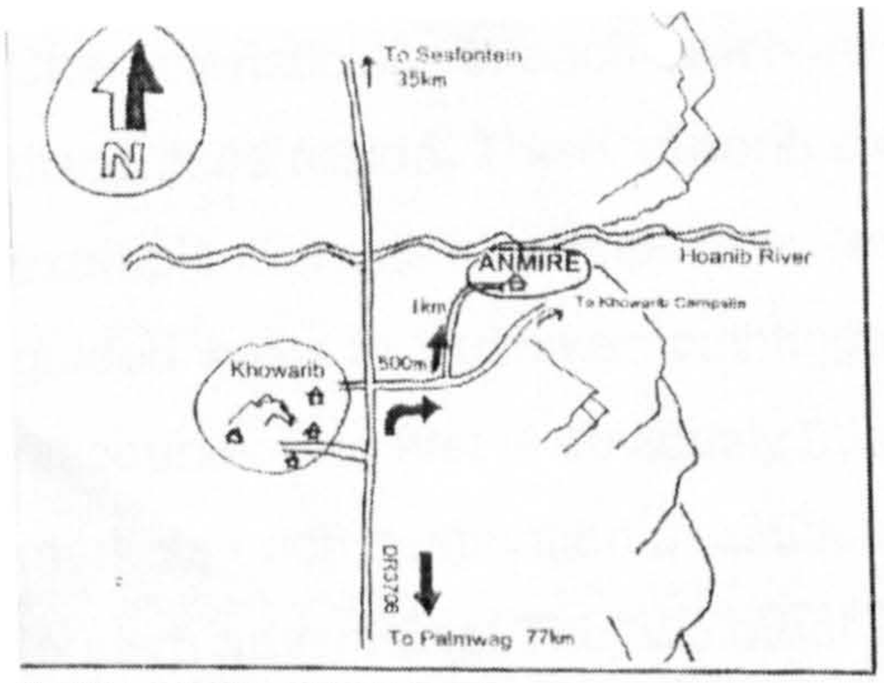


Figure 8.6: Signpost for the Anmire Cultural Village

Anmire's leaflet, produced with the help of the IRDNC, takes up a range of discourses that are likely to appeal to the tourists' interests (see next page *Figure 8.7*). It speaks about Anmire as 'an initiative of a local woman' and as a 'community-based enterprise'. In the leaflet, Anmire expresses its gratitude to the visitors for their contribution to the 'conservation of the environment' and explains that part of the enterprise's profits are distributed to the community. The tourists are invited to 'witness traditional fire making' and 'rituals of the hunt'. With phrases such as 'traditional knowledge', 'cultural heritage' and 'natural resources', the leaflet uses a vocabulary that is known to many of the tourists and ideally responds to their desire to be both 'responsible' tourists and to experience authentic and 'pre-modern' village life. Such key words, as Dann (1996) calls them, can be found frequently in tourism texts. They are what I call important 'semiotic markers' which embody the discourses that inform a specific tourism text or brochure. The reference to 'traditional knowledge' in Anmire's leaflet for example reflects the discourses of nostalgia and cultural diversity.



Coming From Palmwag (±80kms), look out for the signboard on the left-hand side of the road at Khowarib. Turn right, go 500m then turn left and follow the signs for 150m. You can't miss it!

Anmire Cultural Village

OPENING HOURS:

April to December

Mondays to Fridays 9.00am to 4.00pm
Saturdays 9.00am to 1.00pm

Or drop by at Anmire and we can arrange a tour for a time that suits you.

Price of Admission (including tour): N$15.00 per person

Thank you for your contribution to the conservation of our environment and the development of our community.

ANMIRE

Damara Cultural Village

The community of Khowarib invites you to experience first hand the culture and traditions of the Damara people of Namibia. Please join our guided tour of Anmire for a look at both ancient and present ways of Damara living; our houses and foods, our songs and dance, our medicines and rituals.

Come and witness traditional fire making, rituals of the hunt, rites of passage, and lots more.

Anmire (meaning *"form your own opinion"*) is an initiative of a local Damara woman, Monica Ûses, a life-long resident of the village of Khowarib. Together with members of our community she has worked to establish a place where lifestyles of the Damara are accessible for both interested tourists and the youth of the area.

Anmire is a community-based tourism enterprise and is locally owned and managed. Additional profits from our business will be returned to our community as encouragement to care for and responsibly use our valuable natural resources.

Figure 8.7: Anmire's leaflet (front)

Anmire Cultural Vil' age

1. /ûi-oms (Stone House)
2. //ûi-oms (Bark House)
3. /haru-oms (Reed House)
4. Hai-oms (Pole House)
5. Arus (Healing Dance)
6. Kaib Ki !aus (Hunting Dance)
7. Soloândi-oms (Medicine House)
8. //hûs (Stone game)
9. //hae-om ǂnu-oms (Women's House)
10. Office and Reception

A Shor' History of the Damara People

The Damara People are one of the oldest ethnic groups of Namibia. Their ancient history is unrecorded, but the old people of Khowarib tell of the time of their parents and grandparents lived only from the land and natural resources. From the Ugab to the Huab rivers, from Palmwag to Sesfontein, the Damara walked the year round, following the wildlife and the seasons in search of food and water.

The Damara were traditionally hunter-gatherers, owning no livestock and maintaining only small gardens. They relied on wildlife such as springbok and gemsbok for meat, and utilised a great variety of local plants for food and medicines. They were entirely self-sufficient, relying only on their traditional healer, his medicines and his holy fire to help them in times of illness.

With the arrival of the Topnaar Namas and German settlers and missionaries in this area of Namibia, came also a time of great change for the Damara people. Under the influence of these other societies, many of the old ways have been lost. Damara people now live a sedentary lifestyle, herding goats and cattle and farming crops. Modern ways of life are widely accepted, and the knowledge of the old healers is being lost.

The community of Khowarib hopes that by establishing Anmire Cultural Village we will be contributing to the preservation of our cultural heritage and our traditional knowledge, for us, our children, our wild animals, and for the land that we all must share.

- ***Some Nama/Damara Words You Might Like to Know:***

!gâi //goas - "good morning" **mâtisa** -"how are you?"
!gâi-â - "good" **!gâise !gûre** -"goodbye"

- ***How to Pronounce the Nama/Damara Clicks:***

"!" - Tongue at the back of palette. A sharp "pop".
"/" - Tongue behind front top teeth, then soft click.
"//" - Whole tongue against roof of mouth. Soft "pop".
"ǂ" - A quick sharp click from tongue behind front top teeth.

Figure 8.7: Anmire's leaflet (back)

Anmire's leaflet, once again, reveals the situated nature of tourism literacy practices. The text, its lay-out and the pictures it uses, all refer to a set of discourses that are specific to the current tourism market in Namibia.

Characteristically, in each brochure, leaflet or signpost several of these discourses reside. The Khowarib community (see *Figure 8.1* on page 213) for example markets its campsite as 'exclusive', offers 'natural' showers and guided walks to 'bushmen paintings'. Each phrase refers to a different discourse. The first is obviously taken from a general tourism discourse that markets each destination as unique. Exclusive is a very common word in tourism advertising. The two other phrases refer to eco-tourism discourses and ethnic or cultural discourses respectively.

To conclude, my examples have shown that in order to develop locally available resources into a viable tourism product, the producers of tourism brochures and signposts need extensive knowledge of the tourists' wishes and the ability to translate this into appealing tourism texts. Yet, their chances of success depend on a number of local as well as national and global circumstances.

Tourism, one of the fastest growing economies world-wide, is archetypal for the service industries that characterise the New Capitalism with its high demands in terms of knowledge and skills (cf. Gee, Hull and Lanksheer 1996). For those Namibians who get involved in it, the move away from agricultural dominated activities to tourism results in increased need for communication and discourse skills. An essential part of the skills needed for tourism is understanding the currency of specific tourism products in a highly unstable market that is influenced by continuous changes in the consumer culture of western tourists (Urry 1995, Lash and Urry 1994). In that sense, tourism is no different from other service industries that require companies to 'invent, produce, distribute and market' their tourism services (Gee, Hull and Lanksheer 1996, quoted in Holland, C. 1998: 14). Elizabeth and her colleagues at Dhaureb Crafts spent a lot of time creating new motifs for their crafts and experimenting with new products that might appeal to the changing tastes of their customers. Recently, for example, they have started recycling materials such as old tins to produce picture frames. The women at Dhaureb do what people in service industries all over the world have to do, that is, they

'innovatively vary and customise' (Gee, Hull and Lanksheer, quoted in Holland, C. 1998: 14) their products.

I will discuss the effect of global changes in the nature of work and communication and their impact on tourism in Namibia in more detail in Chapter 9. What I wanted to signal here is that local tourism workers, who live far away from the centres of capitalist production, are nevertheless directly affected by changes in the global tourism industry.

6. Tourism discourses: authoritative voices and dominant literacy practices

The examples I have discussed in this and the previous sections illustrate several important insights regarding the role of marketing experts and the position of local people in the production and use of promotional tourism literacy practices. Although Face-to-Face and Anmire created their own signs and phrases to attract visitors to their businesses, the content of these was largely dictated by the dominant tourism discourses of the tourism industry and its national and international agents.

Local people often do not have a role to play in the original production of these discourses, much of which takes place in the home countries of the tourists and in the marketing centres of the global tourism industry. What is usually called the travel literature is centrally responsible for the fabrication and dissemination of tourism discourses. Travel guides and tourism brochures are examples of tourism literacy practices that assign local people an identity that essentially is not their own, but prescribes them what to think, how to act and how to behave towards the tourists.

Windhoek's bookstores are full of travel guides. These 'expert' voices significantly contribute to the shaping of the travellers' perceptions of the places they visit. Travelling through Namibia, I frequently observed tourists consulting their guide books to find out where to go and to stay. In Namibia, the travel literature also includes newspaper articles in the German daily

'Allgemeine Zeitung' which has regular articles on tourism destinations inside the country. Another important publication is the monthly produced and widely distributed 'Travel News Namibia', a professionally designed and highly attractive magazine catering for the arriving tourist and the Namibian traveller. Finally, for a country that offers so much visual stimulation, the coffee table book is important. Rothfuss (1998) notes that the best-selling photographic volume 'Himba-Nomads of Namibia', published in Afrikaans, English and German, has had a significant influence on national and international visitors' perception of the Kaokoland and its inhabitants.

What all the above texts have in common is their effect as 'authoritative' voices that create and disseminate dominant tourism discourses. In a Foucauldian sense, travel writers and journalists, the marketing strategists of tour companies and the tourism officers of the Namibian government are the 'experts' whose discourses become naturalised and accepted as the 'true' accounts of local life and local people.

Similar to the effects of scientific discourses on medical and psychological practice that Foucault studied, tourism discourses structure and regulate the encounter between tourists and hosts. Tourism discourses are both the effect and the support of specific practices (cf. Foucault 1980), that is, of specific tourist behaviours and of particular forms of tourism. Tour operators in Kaokoveld for example offer visits to Himba villages. These are highly structured and ritualised events. They are shaped by and in turn reshape the tourist gaze. At the same time, these encounters can not remain without effect on local identities. At least for the duration of the tourists' visit, the Himba are compelled to take on a 'traditional' role, even if this no longer wholly conforms with their current way of life.

By presenting simplified and exoticised pictures of local culture and nature in well designed and visually attractive brochures, leaflets and travel guides, the representations of local life created for the tourists become the codified and authorised versions of Namibian culture. They will be replicated in newspaper articles, other travel books and in the tourists' own accounts of

their experience. The result of these processes of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Fairclough 1995) is that tourism discourses are replicated and reinforced through their repeated use in various tourism literacy practices and touristic activities. Dann (1996) makes the same argument, referring to tourism language in general.

In this discursive context, Face-to-Face and Anmire had no choice but to accept and adapt to the cultural views that were created by the tourism industry. In the rural areas and the growing urban centres of Namibia, work opportunities are scarce and many people struggle to make a sufficient income from their traditional farming occupations. Not surprisingly, people like Israel saw tourism as an opportunity. But as groups like Anmire and Face-to-Face attempted to access the social and economic resources tourism can provide, they had little choice but to play the game and to emulate the fashionable tourism discourses.

My next argument is closely related to the previous point. Tourism literacies, from the coffee table book and the 'Lonely Planet' to signposts, play an important role in the process of normalisation and commodification of ethnicity (Wai-Teng Leong 1997) and landscape. In their efforts to create attractive and easily consumable tourist images, such texts extract and emphasise selected features of the landscape or the people who live in it. For the sake of marketing, they provide simplified and historically fixed versions of local culture and local identity. These are 'sanitised' in order to fit the stereotypical representations under which tourist products are marketed (ibid.).

In Namibia, these fabrications of local culture are promoted through a comprehensive and powerful marketing system that allows the richer lodge-owner to place large adverts in Travel News Namibia and gives tour operators and international travel agencies the space to influence the tourists' choices weeks before they arrive in the country (Rothfuss 1998). But not only do the discourses of tourism advertisements 'package' a destination, they also support the construction of national identity, by emphasising particular cultural

and political ideologies (Omoniyi 1998). In the case of Namibia, tourism discourses depict the nation as a harmonious multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country, an image that suits the government's efforts to achieve reconciliation and rebuilding of the nation. An example is the description of Katutura in Windhoek's Tourist Info Guide, a booklet that is distributed in the tourism office and in hotels and guesthouses. Referring to Katutura, the guide highlights the city's 'diversity' and the 'development' and 'freedom' that was achieved with independence (Windhoek Tourist Info Guide, no date).

7. The role of local knowledge in tourism discourses

In several of my interviews with tourism workers, we discussed the question of the different sources of knowledge on which tourism discourses rely. In the previous section, I argued that an expert discourse or pseudo-scientific authority often lurks behind tourism discourses. But does tourism also give credit to local knowledge?

Several guides told me that they had gained their knowledge of the local culture in part from travel and school books. If this is the case, whose knowledge then is transmitted and what happens to 'indigenous' sources? In an interesting conversation with Ben, a guide at the Brandberg, we reflected on the difficulties he and his colleagues experienced when putting together the history of the Brandberg from the perspective of its inhabitants. The guides spent a considerable amount of time working with old people from the area and collected much knowledge from them. However, as Ben explained, oral histories are not always clear and many of the stories they were told contradicted each other[8]. He concluded by saying that somehow, as guides, they were obliged to partly create their own versions of local history, based on the various sources they had obtained.

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[8] Fieldnotes, Brandberg, 25.6.2000.

While I listened to Ben, several questions came to my mind. First, I was wondering whether through local guides' personal contact with tourists, local knowledge, despite in many ways being 'subaltern' (see Spivak, in Maddox 2001) to the dominant tourism discourses, could nevertheless feed into the canon of touristic knowledge. In other words, does tourism provide space for the resurrection of popular knowledge, what Foucault calls 'le savoir des gens' (Foucault 1980: 82)? Furthermore, I wondered what would happen if the guides' version, i.e. the account they presented to the tourists, was written down. My thoughts went into two directions. First, would a literate version of the Brandberg's history become the authorised story? What would be the power of such a text and could it hold out against the authorities of a 'Lonely Planet'? Or, would it despite its local sources of knowledge not diverge from the versions of the Brandberg that have already become the canon? And second, if such a text could be turned into an attractive brochure or booklet that tourists could purchase from the guides, could that be a lucrative income for the tour guides at the Brandberg?

The above are questions for further research into the relationship between literacy, discourse and local knowledge which I did not have the opportunity to explore in this research. In the case of Namibia, whose local cultures have long been subjected to the degrading discourses of colonialism and apartheid, such research, while politically highly sensitive, could provide for an interesting contribution to the current debates in the country around nation-building, cultural diversity and the politics of memory and history (cf. Davidson 1998).

8. Conclusions: otherness=diversity?
Or, is tourism a homogenising force?

Analysing tourism brochures and signposts from several CBTEs, discussing their content with its members and comparing these texts with the advertising products of the private tour operators, a characteristic feature of these tourism literacies emerged. In many ways, these brochures, flyers and posters, albeit

at first sight emphasising the distinctiveness of Namibian cultures and Namibian people, in fact are part of broader homogenising and globalising cultural forces and their associated literacy and discourse practices.

In a short paper on local literacies, Barton (1994b) argues that in the current world, community practices of reading and writing are exposed to two opposing trends, globalisation and diversification. Education, he explains, is a homogenising force. The spread of English is associated with global cultural (and economic) influences. Tourism could be seen as another such influence. More precisely, Barton explains, it is the spread of specific literacy practices and of certain concepts of language and literacy that impacts on local communicative and cultural practices (ibid.). This is certainly the case with tourism, but I would emphasise the spread of specific discourse practices and genres, for example advertising.

Graburn notes that for the growing tourism industry, 'the world is fast homogenising' (1995: 159). Diversity blends into similarities, 'channelled by the same sorts of techno-bureaucratic institutions' (ibid.) and, I would add, constrained by a set of cultural images and semiotic processes that originate in the cultural worlds and the marketing industries of the guest countries. I would like to suggest that this globalising and homogenising force of tourism rests on the combined effect of the tourism industry's commercial bureaucracies with a set of powerful communicative practices on which it relies.

Global tourism and travel, I argue, has homogenising effects. Although visitors come to foreign countries to learn about 'difference', it is only a certain difference they are willing to see. In Namibia, this is best captured by the three 'Es': exclusive, ethno and eco. As the tourists come to meet the 'noble savage' and admire the local landscape, they want to go home feeling they have contributed their share to preserving local culture and nature, while still having had the exclusive experience that will make their holiday stand out against their neighbour's annual trip to Spain.

Tourists in Kaokoveld have expressed their dismay at Himba asking to be paid in cash in return for posing for photographs. As part of the role local people are expected to play for tourists, they have to stage a form of life that gets by without the attributes of modern industrial societies. That they are assumed to live a life without money and TV, without schools and shops, in the eyes of the visitor seem to give the local population a particular charm and attraction. Effectively, tourism here seeks to impose specific identities.

Yet the images of the local population that the visitor brings with her to the encounter with the host are presented in a language that has become common to people all over the world and by which even local communities, much to the dismay of the European tourist, have been contaminated. The homogenising effects of tourism and tourism literacy practices are not only fuelled by the desires of foreign tourists. Local people themselves serve as the agents of westernisation and consumerism. Quite understandably, the 'noble savages' are not always keen on acting the parts the tourist brochures have assigned them. CBTEs are built by members of deprived communities who seek to improve their own living conditions. People like Israel or Monica, who embrace the literacies of tourism, are the active agents of a process of social change whose aim it is to move closer to the standards of the developed world (Graburn 1995). Tourism as an isolated factor is rarely the sole pursuer of change, but its effects are interrelated with other processes of social and economic transformation (Nash 1996). In Namibia, these are increasing access to education, both formal and non-formal, the opening of the homelands, the abolition of pass laws and the resulting growth in mobility and migration. The proclamation of English as the new official language further contributes to a process of change that seems to move towards greater homogenisation.

In essence, the local 'primitives' are busily building their own path towards a modernity and postmodernity that has striking resemblance with the world the tourists are seeking to escape from. However, for the time being, the inequalities between the host populations and their foreign visitors by and

large seem to be insurmountable. The tourist's hegemonic position, as I showed earlier, is not only expressed in monetary terms. It is equally transparent in the guests' obvious power to authorise and codify their desired picture of the local culture and in its effect on local culture and identity. In this context, local communities such as the Khowarib community at Anmire struggle to gain and maintain a degree of control over tourism development in their region and over 'the politics of representation' that come along with tourism.

But despite the indubitable normalising power of tourism discourses and tourism literacy practices, there is an opposing trend, what Barton calls diversification. He rightly argues that as local people take hold of new literacies (and I would add here of new discourses), they actively transform and extend these to suit their own uses and priorities (Barton 1994b). However, as I will show in the next chapter, in the increasingly globalised environment of tourism, local choices are limited and diversity does not easily win against the homogenising forces of global economies and their associated literacy practices.

9. GLOBAL, NATIONAL, LOCAL: TOURISM LITERACY PRACTICES AND THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NAMIBIA

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I address the wider constellation of policies and discourses that frame tourism development in Namibia. By doing so, I place the discussion of local tourism literacy practices, i.e. the reading and writing practices of local tourism workers and community-based tourism enterprises, within the broader framework of globalisation and capitalist production and the development of tourism as one of the world's biggest service industries.

The colourful images of tourism discourses and the increasingly global literacy practices of marketing, which I described in the previous chapter, are not the only powerful discourses that impinge on local tourism enterprises. Tourism brings other discourses into the local arena: the development and environment discourses promoted by the state and the NGOs, who support the CBTEs, and the discourses of human resource development that increasingly inform national and international education policies. As local communities accept partnerships with local government institutions and NGOs, they are drawn into this new discursive framework. Furthermore, they are affected by legal and bureaucratic practices, for example those related to land user rights. In the following sections, I discuss a number of policy discourses that are associated with tourism development in Namibia and examine their effects on the activities of local tourism workers and CBTEs.

2. Legal literacy practices: the Permission to Occupy

In 'The economies of signs and space', Lash and Urry (1994) describe the emergence of modern organised tourism in Britain. They explain how the event of large-scale tourism, in particular to foreign countries, necessitated the establishment of a professionally organised travel system that changed tourism from a risky and uncertain individual endeavour to a scheduled and organised activity whose success was guaranteed by professional advice. In Namibia, despite the relatively low numbers of visitors, tourism is a well developed and institutionalised sector with links to the main 'sender' countries. The state's involvement in tourism, inter alia, results in discursive interventions and regulations that affect both community-based as well as private tourism enterprises.

The political and legal framework surrounding the development of tourism in Namibia subjects tourism workers and tourism-related enterprises to administrative and regulatory processes. At the local level, these often appear in the form of increased 'paperwork' (see Jones 2000a and Chapter 5 of this thesis). In this section, I present an example of a legal literacy practice that is particularly important for local tourism enterprises.

In the communal areas, no private land ownership is possible, as legally all land is owned by the state. Any private or community-based initiative which wants to set up a business on communal land needs to apply for a so-called 'Permission to Occupy' (PTO). PTOs grant the right to usufruct, but the allotment cannot be conveyed into ownership therein.

PTOs are granted by the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MLRR), through its respective regional office and the national office in Windhoek. The application procedure is complex and in the case of a tourism-related business in addition to the general application form, which in itself is an intricate literacy practice, includes an environmental questionnaire. Both forms are in English (see next page *Figure 9.1*).

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF LANDS, RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION

Tel (061) 292111
Fax (061) 234756

Private Bag 13343
Windhoek

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO OCCUPY A SITE

This application must be submitted in duplicate to the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation and must be accompanied by a sketch map which clearly indicates the position of the site applied for.

General Conditions

1 The proposed site must not be situated less than 100 metres from a proclaimed main public road.

2 Within six months of the date of approval the site must be fenced to the owner of a compulsory removal of the site as a result of future planning. the applicant is responsible for his/her own removal expenses without any claim from the State

Part A - Particulars of Applicant

1 Full name (s) if the applicant is an individual (s)----------

2 Nationality----------

3 ID No----------

4 Company name if an applicant is a company or firm----------

5 Company registered No ----------

(All applications should be accompanied by certified copies of identification documents)

6 Address----------

7 Telephone No---------- Fax----------

8 Distance from established or proposed township----------

PART B - Particulars of a Site

9 Purpose for which site is required----------

10 Approximate size of site in square metres----------

11 Allocation of a site (Area and Region)----------

12 If transfer of an existing is required state

(a) Name of present holder----------

(b) Number and date of present Permission to Occupy Certificate----------

(In case of transfer a signed agreement between the parties above of should be attached to this application)

Part C - Application Motivation

Where applicable should attach a feasibility study in respect of the application including

(a) a management matters, describing the ownership control and business operation including information on relevant skills and experience of the applicant

(b) a detailed description of how the Permission to Occupy will provide for broad and balanced participation by the inhabitants in the Region This should include a number of employment to be made available to local communities

(c) a financial analysis showing how the applicant s proposal would be financed, with projected costs and income For registered firms, the analysis should also show how the project will contribute to the Receipt of Revenue and

(d) any other relevant supporting material

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for a Permission to Occupy a site on State and

Figure 9.1: Pages 1 and 2 of the application form for a PTO

The first step normally is to seek the support of the traditional local authorities, the local chiefs or headmen, who will allocate a plot or consent to the land chosen by the applicant. Once this is achieved and certified by the local authorities on the back page of the form, the form has to be filled in. It is then handed over to the Regional Governor for his approval. The regional office of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism is consulted for its opinion, but has no right to challenge the decision of the governor. When the application has passed the regional level, it is sent for final approval to the MLRR's PTO committee in Windhoek. When a PTO is granted, the applicants receive a document called the 'Schedule' that certifies the permission and specifies its conditions, i.e. the size of the allotment, the yearly rental and any other attached conditions regarding for example buildings and other infrastructure[1].

---

[1] Information obtained from M. Kaseba, PTO officer, Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Windhoek, 28.8.2000.

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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Part A - Particulars of Applicant

1. Full name (s) of the applicant if an individual (1)----------
2. Nationality----------
3. ID No----------
4. Company name if an applicant is a company or firm----------
5. Company registered No----------

(All applications should be accompanied by certified copies of identification documents)

6. Address----------
7. Telephone No---------- Fax----------
8. Distance from established or proposed township----------

PART B - Particulars of a Site

9. Purpose for which site is required----------
10. Approximate size of site in square metres----------
11. Allocation of a site (Area and Region)----------
12. If transfer of an existing is required state
(a) Name of present holder----------
(b) Number and date of present Permission to Occupy Certificate----------

In case of transfer, a signed agreement between the parties thereof should be attached to this application.

Part C - Application Motivation

Where applicable should attach a feasibility study in respect of the application including

(a) a management analysis, describing the ownership, control and business operation, including information on relevant skills and experience of the applicant;

(b) a detailed description of how the Permission to Occupy will provide for broad and balanced participation by the inhabitants in the Region. This should include a number of employment to be made available to local communities;

(c) a financial analysis showing how the applicant's proposal would be financed, with projected costs and income. For registered firms, the analysis should also show how the project will contribute to the Receipt of Revenue, and

(d) any other relevant supporting material.

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for a Permission to Occupy a site on State and

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[1] Information obtained from M. Kaseba, PTO officer, Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Windhoek, 28.8.2000.

According to NACOBTA, the application process normally takes about three months or longer. In the case of the CBTEs, usually one of its members applies on behalf of the group. Since the application requires handling a fair amount of complex bureaucratic and legal discourse, communities normally seek the support of a local teacher or businessmen to help them with the form[2]. S/he acts as a literacy mediator.

The PTO is a legal literacy practice that is centrally important for CBTEs (cf. Aikman 2001). It relates to the complex and highly political issue of land user rights and has implications for the status of a CBTE and its relationship with the local and national authorities. Despite having obtained a PTO, legally and administratively, CBTEs nevertheless occupy an ambiguous position. They are not registered as businesses. Their 'non-legal' position can lead to further bureaucratic hurdles. Face-to-Face Tours for example could not open a bank account on the company's name, because legally it does not exist.

3. The political framework of tourism development in Namibia: Face-to-Face Tours' experience with the Windhoek Municipality

Having given an example of a specific legal literacy practices related to tourism, I now discuss the broader arena of policies and politics that affect the position of CBTEs and local tourism workers in Namibia. In order to illustrate the analytical points I am going to make, I describe a meeting between Israel and Philadelphia from Face-to-Face Tours with the Windhoek Municipality's tourism officer, at which I was present.

As in other countries (see for example Dahles for Indonesia, Dahles 1999), the Windhoek Municipality has reacted to the new tourism fashion for 'alternative' travel (Windhoek Tourist Info, no date) by creating a supportive policy environment for local tourism enterprises. As the following example will show, this can lead to a closer involvement of CBTEs with local government

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[2] Interview with A. Davidson, NACOBTA, Windhoek, 3.8.2000.

structures. As local tourism businesses become part of the government's agenda to promote the development of local communities (MET 1995a and b), they are subjected to the broader constellation of discourses that underpins the government's development policy. Face-to-Face Tours' involvement with the Windhoek Municipality is a good case to illustrate some of these discourses. Furthermore, it exemplifies the role of different stakeholders and their interests in the structural and discursive environment of local tourism development.

While I conducted my research in Namibia, Face-to-Face Tours had been approached by the Municipality with an offer of co-operation and support for advertising and training. Prior to my involvement with the group, the Municipality had already been in contact with Face-to-Face Tours. In part, this communication had been mediated by NACOBTA. According to the guides, the Municipality had offered to engage them as official city guides during a major international symposium that took place in Windhoek in May 2000. However, due to circumstances that never became entirely clear, in the end the work was given to a private tour operator. Thus, when I started to work with Face-to-Face Tours, their relationship with the Municipality had already resulted in a disappointment.

The purpose of the meeting with Windhoek's Tourism Officer was to discuss the proposed co-operation between the Municipality and the group. Two offers had been made and were discussed during the meeting. First, to sponsor a training course for the group, and second, in future to incorporate Face-to-Face Tours in the Municipality's tourist services as official city guides. The second offer remained at the stage of preliminary proposal.

During the meeting, Zanne, the City of Windhoek's Tourism Officer, explained the conditions of her proposal. She laid out the responsibilities required of the group. In the second half of the meeting, she explained in detail what the group had to do in order to apply for financial support – to be used to finance training – from the Municipality. The content of the proposed training was discussed in much detail and Zanne was very specific about the

things she felt the group had to learn. While she talked, she constantly juggled with papers and documents and she repeatedly referred to and read from a course outline for a training course organised by the Namibian Academy for Tourism and Hospitality (see below), a copy of which lay in front of her.

While I sensed that Israel and Philadelphia tried to voice what they felt to be their own training needs, being 'bombarded' with Zanne's proposals, they found it difficult to do so. Undoubtedly, the place of the meeting, Zanne's personality, her ethnic background (white Afrikaaner), her apparent professionalism, the language used (English) and the literacy practices she made use of contributed to the group's unease. The power differentials between her and the group were underlined by the way our meeting place was marked as a professional and bureaucratic space that invoked authority and regulations (cf. Emmison and Smith 2000). We met in Zanne's office, at the Windhoek Municipality, in the city centre. The room signalled a typical office space, crowded with professional literacy artefacts (computer, folders, documents, etc.). Her desk provided a boundary between her and her governmental authority, concentrated behind the desk, and us, squeezed in on several chairs on the other side, barely fitting in the cramped space available.

As a consequence of the rather oppressive space and Zanne's assertive voice, I soon found myself in the position of negotiator on behalf of the group. My role was facilitated by my lack of shyness, the relative ease with which I took up and responded to Zanne's discourses and, quite bluntly, by my skin colour.

Given the importance of what was said and my knowledge of similar situations, I took extensive notes of the conversation. My motives were twofold. I intended to use the notes for my own research, but at the same time I sensed that they might be important for the group and their further negotiations with the Municipality. I expected that many of the statements made might later be taken as verbatim proposals and evidence of consent

and might be used as the basis for future discussions and a written agreement.

My notes did indeed prove to be useful, as a reference in a later meeting with NACOBTA (whose support was crucial for the group's position in relation to the Municipality), but also to help us immediately after the discussions with Zanne to clarify what exactly had been proposed and how the group should react. I also took detailed notes of how Face-to-Face Tours were to formulate an official letter of application, as Zanne had requested us to do.

As newcomers to the tourism business, the guides from Face-to-Face Tours had little experience with the kind of situation described above and the literacy and discourse strategies required to operate in this sphere. Meeting literacies, such as note taking, or other practices such as writing letters of application, are essential for these contexts. Kell (1995) describes similar difficulties for local activists in a Cape Town settlement who after the fall of the apartheid regime became involved with local development structures and civic groups. She argues that one of the issues local groups in South Africa struggle with is their lack of familiarity with the new discourse configuration of redress and development that has emerged since the end of apartheid.

In a similar way, the guides from Face-to-Face Tours found themselves part of a new and unfamiliar discourse environment populated by voices like Zanne's who confidently 'juggled' with official phrases and positions. Behind her words lay the Municipality's discourse of 'black empowerment'[3]. 'Black empowerment' resonates with the government's policy of affirmative action and its attempts to alleviate poverty and to achieve a reduction of inequalities in income distribution (National Planning Commission 1995). The policies by which these are to be achieved are economic growth, human resource development and to a lesser extent redistribution (National Planning Commission 1995, 1998; MEC 1993).

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[3] Fieldnotes, Windhoek Municipality, meeting with the Municipality's tourism officer, 20.6.2000.

In Namibia's current development policy, tourism is regarded as a motor for economic growth and the creation of employment and income (MET 1994, 1995a and b). The emphasis is on overall growth of the economy, the assumption being that a trickle down effect will bring benefits to large parts of the population. In the national tourism policy, these broader goals are qualified in terms of the more specific aims of sustainable community development and empowerment of the formerly marginalised population groups. These latter aims play a particularly prominent role in government rhetoric, as central pillars of the policy of reconciliation and development which is closely integrated with a discourse of 'freedom' (relating to independence) and democracy (National Planning Commission 1995; MEC 1993; cf. Dobell 1998).

But in order to fulfil its promises as a provider of new jobs and a motor of development, the tourism industry in Namibia has to continue to grow at a substantial rate. The mainstay of Namibian tourism so far has been safari holidays. However, in terms of wildlife numbers Namibia cannot compete with other African countries who attract a much larger share of the overseas visitors. Therefore, government and private tour operators aim to diversify the Namibian tourism product (Ashley 1995). Tourism policy now emphasises the country's many cultural assets.

In order to achieve the desired growth of tourism, the Windhoek Municipality seeks to improve the city's attraction as a tourist destination. Like many private tour operators, who seek joint ventures with rural communities, the Municipality has recognised the foreigner's taste for the 'real' Namibian life. This includes acknowledgement that many visitors want to see Katutura, the former black township. On their tour, they want to be accompanied by a black guide, not a white Namibian[4]. It is within this context that the Municipality's interest in Face-to-Face Tours needs to be seen.

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[4] Interview with I. Klein, NATH, Windhoek, 3.8.2000.

The guides, on the other hand, were particularly interested in the opportunity to gain further training. In addition, they hoped that their co-operation with the Municipality would improve their status as local guides and bring them new clients. But because the guides were unfamiliar with the discourses of black empowerment and affirmative action, it was difficult for them to take up Zanne's words or to use her discourses in order to pursue their own interests. This example illustrates the importance of discourse knowledge for people who, like the tour guides, enter new institutional contexts. Knowledge of literacy or language alone, in a disembedded form, would not allow the group to affirm their position vis-à-vis the Municipality. Furthermore, their lack of familiarity with specific literacy practices, such as note taking or writing a letter of application, put them in a position where they depended on outside mediators.

4. Training and professionalisation: formalising local tourism literacy practices and local tourism knowledge

The above examples of Face-to-Face Tours' contact with the Municipality illustrate a further issue that is crucial for the status of small-scale and community-based tourism businesses in the Namibian tourism industry. This relates to training, certification and the standardisation of services.

It appears that the establishment of a professionally organised tourism sector, of which government and private sector are the main agents, invariably leads to increased regulation and standardisation (cf. Dahles and Bras 1999). This can lead to requirements for professional training to become more rigid and standardised. In addition, international factors play a role. Because of Namibia's transnational links with tour companies in the 'sender' countries, these companies can impose their standards on tourism facilities in Namibia.

In Chapter 4, I explained why for many of the learners in the NLPN's classes in Windhoek certificates and a formal qualification, equivalent to a

school certificate, were so important. Local tourism workers and in particular tour guides also regarded formal qualifications as important.

In the following sections, I will explain why a training certificate or a professional qualification could make a difference to local tourism workers. I will discuss the role of training and qualifications as a factor in the increased institutionalisation and formalisation of the Namibian tourism industry. My argument highlights the importance of qualifications and certificates to signal professional status and as a marketing device. I do not provide a comprehensive overview of the current training facilities for local tourism workers in Namibia. Accordingly, I do not discuss the content of training itself, or aim to assess its outcomes. This would have gone beyond the scope of this case study.

Attempts to formalise and often to control the informal sector, that springs up in response to tourism, are known from other countries (see for example Dahles 1999; Pattullo 1996). In Namibia, informal sector activities have so far been tolerated and at least rhetorically been supported by government, as they are part of a policy to promote development in the formerly marginalised communities.

In theory, therefore, local tourism workers did not need to have any formal qualifications. Yet, whether members of community-based tourism enterprises had some form of professional training or not could make a crucial difference to their income. At the Brandberg near Uis, tourists hire a local guide who takes them on tours lasting two to three hours to see the famous rock paintings. In summer 2000, when I visited the Brandberg, the fees for the tour were only N$20 per person (about £2). Given the fact that the Brandberg's rock paintings are an internationally renown attraction, these fees struck me as astonishingly low. Ben, one of the guides at the Brandberg, explained why this was so. As one of Namibia's cultural heritage sites, the Brandberg is administered by the country's Monument Council which is also responsible for setting the fees visitors have to pay for guided tours. Because not all of the 15

guides who worked at the Brandberg had had any formal training, the fees were set at a low level[5].

One of NACOBTA's main activities as an umbrella organisation for CBTEs is to provide training to its members. Many of the local tourism workers whom I interviewed, including several of the guides at the Brandberg, had participated in NACOBTA's courses on basic tourism training and on tour guiding. Others had attended the association's training on how to set up a community-based tourism enterprise. These courses, run as seven to ten day residential seminars, are designed to meet the specific needs of the NACOBTA members. The course modules show that particular attention is given to the specific discourse styles of tourists and the communicative requirements of dealing with foreign guests. In the business-related modules that are part of the training, a range of specific tourism-related literacy practices, for example income statements and balance sheets, are introduced[6].

At the time of my research in Namibia, NACOBTA's courses were not accredited by Namibia's National Qualifications Authority. But for the guides who were trained by NACOBTA, the courses nevertheless signified an important improvement in status and self-confidence. Ben explained that being a trained guide was particularly significant for him and his colleagues, who worked at tourist sites that were scattered over the communal areas. Local guides like Ben faced the competition of the so-called 'national' guides. These are the employees of private tour and safari companies who take visitors on tours throughout the country.

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[5] Information provided by Ben, local tour guide at the Brandberg, 26.6.2000.

[6] In 1999, NACOBTA offered three types of training courses: Basic introduction to tourism and community-based tourism, developing a community based tourism enterprise and local tour guiding (NACOBTA info sheet 1999; NACOBTA Update, Vol. 2, No. June-July 1999; NACOBTA Strategic Plan 1998-2001)). My knowledge about these courses was obtained in several interviews with NACOBTA's training officer. In addition, I spent two afternoons in NACOBTA's office looking at the course modules and teaching materials.

An important difference between these national guides and the local tour guides is that the former have much easier access to professional training than the latter. The Namibian Academy for Tourism and Hospitality's (NATH), a private training institution, offers a 'National Tourist Guide Training Course'. This course, which is open to everybody, is widely used by the private tourism industry. However, the course is relatively expensive, it is only offered in Windhoek and the language of instruction is English. The majority of its participants are white Namibians. Of the 30 trainees who enrolled for the national tour guide training at the beginning of 2000, only 8 were black[7]. None of the local tourism workers whom I met had been a trainee on NATH's course.

Despite the value of NACOBTA's training for guides like Ben or Israel, NATH's course provides a crucial gatekeeping function. It reinforces the existing inequalities between local tourism workers and the employees of private tour operators. Although at the time of my research even NATH's training was not accredited by Namibia's National Qualifications Authority, it was recognised by the industry and opened up the doors for employment by private tour operators[8]. NACOBTA's courses did not easily allow local tourism workers to find employment in the private sector.

In Namibia, the difficulty for local guides whose knowledge has been acquired mainly informally is that in order to convert their experience into economic capital, they may need certificates and formal qualifications. The de facto existence of different categories of tour guides, i.e. 'local' and 'national' guides, further explains this situation. These appear to be powerful labels that notwithstanding the differences in knowledge and experience that may or may not exist, invariably confine local guides to a lower status.

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7 Interview with I. Klein, NATH, Windhoek, 3.8.2000.

8 Interview with A. Davidson, NACOBTA, 3.8.2000.

The government appears to have recognised the need to accommodate local tourism workers' training in regulations on grading and registration (MET 1995a). But no explicit policy exists that takes into account local tour guides (Ashley 1995). The 1995 policy document on community-based tourism recommends that guide categories should include 'village guides' (ibid.; MET 1995a). This term, which I never heard used by any of the local guides, struck me as particularly unfortunate, as it is likely to confirm the local guides' subordinate position vis-à-vis the private national guides. One is inclined to assume that the use of such a term in official policy documents further serves to affirm the position of the private guides and the importance of formal qualifications.

From the perspective of local guides, the status differences between them and the private (white) guides were significant. Siegfried, a guide at the Brandberg, put it this way: the national guides, he said, 'know everything'[9].

Not surprisingly, then, those guides who had had some training, used their qualification as a marketing device. In their flier, Face-to-Face Tours mention that they are 'indigenous trained guides'. They rightly assume that foreign visitors may prefer a trained guide. At the same time, knowing that ethnic tourism is fashionable, the group also capitalises on their own background as an important discursive strategy to signal their 'authenticity' as 'truly' local guides who live in Katutura. Furthermore, in 1999 and 2000, Face to Face Tours was the only group that offered visits to the township. While several private tour companies from Windhoek, whose guides were all white, offered city tours that included the township, they did not stop in Katutura. This is an example of how the members of a CBTE for the sake of their business took on a particular identity.

The gap between the local tour guides and their white counterparts raises an issue that I have already addressed in Chapter 4: the role of formal

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9 Interview with Siegfried, tour guide, Brandberg 26.6.2000, interview conducted in English.

qualifications, when employment opportunities are restricted and when no clear mechanism for the valuation of informally acquired experience exists. In this situation, the high value of professional qualifications tends to reinforce inequalities that largely exist due to historical and structural factors. In Bourdieu's terms, qualifications and certificates serve as a form of symbolic capital, behind which the material conditions that explain the status differences between those who do have formal qualifications and those who don't are disguised. In the Namibian tourism industry, this symbolic capital re-enforces the boundaries between the formal sector and the community-based enterprises that operate at the margins between formal and informal economy.

To summarise, the above examples show how the involvement of the state in tourism and the presence of a strong private sector, can lead to formalisation and professionalisation of the sector. As a result of this process, particular literacy practices, such as certificates, acquire particular authority. In the dense and hierarchical tourism market of Namibia, possessing a certificate is a matter of status. From a Foucauldian perspective, we have here instances of normalisation that reveal the influence of a discourse of professionalism. Certificates and standards are technologies of power that serve gatekeeping functions. As training and certificates become more important, local tourism workers and CBTEs often find themselves in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the employees of private tour companies.

5. Certificates and badges: literacy as display

Guides and CBTE members also mentioned the importance of name tags and badges. Participants of NACOBTA's training courses usually received a certificate of attendance, but no badge. For tourists, who come from countries where company identifications are a normality, badges are a familiar literacy practice. Ben, the guide at the Brandberg, had made his own badge that responded to the tourist's desire to meet an 'official' looking guide rather than the village boy. He used the Brandberg Community Project's business card, to

which he had added his name and his profession, as a badge that he had attached to his shirt. Thus identifiable as a guide and a member of a community project he awaited visitors to the Brandberg.

Undoubtedly, Ben had recognised the power a badge can convey onto the person who wears it. What is interesting about this is how Ben used his insider knowledge of the tourist's valuation of an identification to create for himself his own name tag.

The badge is an example of the role of literacy as display (Hamilton 2000: 20). Name tags and badges serve as identifications that show the bearer's membership or affiliation with a group or an institution. At the same time, badges, like certificates, can serve as evidence of a title or a qualification. Such literacies are displays of status. With his badge, Ben gave himself a professional identity which he wanted the tourists to recognise. Literacy here was used by Ben as part of his attempts to establish himself as a professional guide. The badge was supposed to give him legitimisation. This was particularly important for him and his colleagues who tried to assert their status vis-à-vis the national tour guides (see above). These employees of private tour companies arrive with groups of tourists at the Brandberg, but according to Ben, most of them do not want to hire a local guide. In my conversation with Ben, he insisted that all visitors to the Brandberg should be accompanied by a local guide. With his claim he tried to establish the Brandberg Community Project and its local tour guides' against the competition of private tour operators. One could say that he appropriated this literacy practice in a way that had particular significance for his situation as a local tour guide.

Badges were also important marketing tools. Wearing his badge, Ben advertised his group, the Brandberg Community Project. Israel and Philadelphia from Face-to-Face Tours also wore badges when they took tourists through Katutura. The badge showed the company's logo and the guide's name. With their badges, Ben, Israel and Kate have taken up a

literacy practice that is widely used in the tourism industry and in the guests' home countries.

6. Tourism, literacy and the New Work Order

In the previous sections, I have discussed the role of training, of standards and regulations in Namibia's tourism industry. Similar practices are common in tourism industries world-wide.

Tourism is one of the biggest service industries in the world and it is characterised by its transnational links between the host countries and their main sender countries. The reality of international tourism nowadays is that to a large extend it is controlled by transnational tourism corporations. The influence of these foreign and multinational tourism companies impacts hugely on policies in the host countries. In today's context, such corporations increasingly have the power to impose the same structures, working patterns and communication practices wherever they set up their businesses or find their local partners. As a world-wide industry, tourism exemplifies the process of globalisation whose growing influence changes economic, political and social realities in developed as well as developing countries[10].

Namibia, although not the preferred destination of the majority of European and North-American tourists, nevertheless has become part of this global network of tourism structures and businesses. National policy supports such links. Tourism development is part of a set of foreign and economic policies that favour close co-operation with Europe, in particular with Germany, and seek to attract foreign investment. To give an example, German-based travel companies offer a range of individual and packaged holidays to Namibia. Organised safari trips are particularly popular[11]. These

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[10] For a discussion of the impact of globalisation on the decreasing power of national governments see Heertz (2001).

[11] With Studiosus, DER Tour and GeBeCo, three German tour operators offer holidays in Namibia.

companies collaborate with local tour operators and lodge owners and guest farms. Burns (1999: 114) rightly argues that such forms of tourism 'are an integral part of the global political economy'. Because the entire trip is arranged from the travel companies' offices in Germany, there is little opportunity for other local providers to step in and offer their services.

Because of Namibia's close collaboration with western governments, its dependence on international aid and the transnational links of the tourism industry, changes in the European and North-American economy have immediate repercussions for the local tourism sector. Although located thousands of miles away from the world centres of economic production, Namibia is already affected by the new consumer-oriented capitalism that reigns in the economies of the industrialised societies. Together with the tourists, who search for new experiences, aspects of what are called the 'New Capitalism' and the 'New Work Order' (Gee, Hull and Lanksheer 1996) have found their way into the country.

The following examples illustrate the impact of the New Capitalism on tourism in Namibia. Competition, as Gee notes, in the New Capitalism is 'hyper-intense' and those who want to survive need to be able to produce the right product 'on time' and for the right 'niche' (Gee 2000: 185). This, in particular, concerns tourism. By and large, tourism markets are saturated, hence the need for any business to constantly recreate high quality goods and services (cf. Gee and Lanksheer 1997). Namibia's biggest obstacle to expanding its tourism industry is that several others countries in Southern and Eastern Africa have equally specialised in safari and wildlife tourism. Therefore, the safari tourism market is by and large saturated. As a consequence, there is very little space for new providers, for example community-based groups, to find a place in the tourism industry. This was further exacerbated by South Africa's re-entry into the tourism market at the end of apartheid in 1994. In response to this situation, Namibia is now trying to improve its attractiveness as a country that not only offers spectacular wildlife and scenery, but a rich local culture and history. In doing so, it

attempts to build for itself a niche in the Southern African tourism market. Developing community-based tourism with its emphasis on local culture is a central part of this strategy.

But despite these policies that positively affect the situation of local tourism enterprises in Namibia, local groups face many constraints. Through the global networks of the tourism industry, they are affected by the discourses of production and quality that have colonised work patterns in the centres of the New Capitalism. As part of the same developments, standards are becoming ever more important. Holland, C. et al. quote a definition of 'Total Quality Management' (TQM) that illustrates the repercussions such a term can have on local economies: TQM 'can be defined as zero defects in the products and services provided by an organisation in order to satisfy customer needs' (Collard 1993, in Holland, C. 1998: 23). It is easy to imagine what this means for a local CBTE which, as most community-based tourism enterprises in Namibia, is still in its first years of existence or even in the process of being set up. Tourists who look for 'zero defects' are unlikely to ever set foot in a local tourism enterprise. Global competitiveness around the ideal of 'total' quality can be expected to result in exacerbating the difficulties of local tourism enterprises who already face competition by privately owned camp sites, lodges and tour operators. This issue is addressed by NACOBTA. The organisation is aware that the standards which are used by the private sector (e.g. rating systems for hotels and lodges) can not be applied to the CBTEs. However, the organisation believes that a system of standards is important and plans to develop one in the future[12].

I want to suggest that the issue of qualifications and badges that tourism workers increasingly need to possess is related to the context of the New Capitalism and the impact of globalisation on communicative practices as well as on training and education policies. The need for badges and identifications is an effect of the type of marketing strategies the New Capitalism has so

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12 Interview with A. Davidson, NACOBTA, Windhoek, 3.8.2000.

successfully promoted. In the age of branding and logos (see below), marketing includes the creation of a particular identity for a companies' employees which is systematically promoted by means of advertising. The question of professional qualifications needs to be seen as part of a broader process of homogenisation that is fostered by companies who increasingly operate on a global basis and seek to reduce their costs by standardisation. A hotel chain for example, that operates in a range of countries, will seek to standardise its operating procedures and personnel practices, including its training and recruitment policies (Burns 1999). For the sake of rationalisation and cost reduction, it is also likely to standardise its physical product, such as architecture and promotional literature (ibid.).

Having said this much about globalisation, the main issue behind the discourse of qualifications is the fragile position of local tourism workers within the industry (cf. Gee 2000). The New Work Order does not dispense with hierarchies. The work of the 'enchanted' few, the 'core' of the highly skilled knowledge workers is unthinkable without the labour provided by the majority at the periphery (Gee and Lanksheer 1997).

Periphery, of course, is a term that has a long history in development discourse. In the context of the New Work Order, it captures a reality of tourism in the developing world that is hard to deny: the majority of local people who find employment and income through tourism are part of the periphery of the New Capitalism. Tourism, like many other industries of the New Capitalism, requires a 'large, cheap and flexible workforce' (ibid.: 89). Most of those who work in the service industries, of which tourism is one of the biggest in the world, belong to the 'uneducated' periphery. They are excluded from the core of knowledge workers (ibid.). Professional qualifications and certificates, like those provided by NATH or the qualifications many of the white tourism employees have acquired in Europe, are a means of gatekeeping by those who belong to the core and regulate entrance from the periphery.

The currency of certificates and formal qualifications, in other words the need to seek 'paper qualifications' (O'Connor, cited in Holland, C. et al. 1998: 33) can further be attributed to changes in the global policy framework of adult education and training. Education ministries world-wide have apprehended the goals of economic growth and stressed the importance of adult education for economic development. In the discourse of human resource development, the requirements of the labour market severely restrict the content of adult education, a development that characterises the policy context in many countries, developing and developed alike (Korsgaard 1997; Hamilton, Macrae and Tett 2001).

Increasingly education and training are regarded as the prerequisites for success in the global economy. 'Skills' has become a key term in international economic competition. This results in adult education policy being driven by market considerations rather than the ideals of social justice and personal development (Korsgaard 1997). Shifts towards a more vocationally oriented adult education system make it more difficult for experience-based and informally acquired skills to be recognised as they are ill fitted to a formal and often narrowly defined system of accreditation. Undoubtedly, as I have argued earlier, parts of this new language of adult education have found their way into education and training discourses in the South[13]. This can for example be seen in the overall design of the NLPN which is closely articulated with formal schooling but makes no clear provisions to recognise informally acquired and work-related skills. Strikingly, the Namibian policy on adult education regards the acquisition of literacy and basic skills as a necessary first step, before any vocational training can begin. The question is how people like Joseph (see Chapter 8), the guide at Twyfelfontein who impressed me with his language skills, but who had never been to school, fit into such a structure.

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[13] The impact of globalisation on adult education and training policies in industrialised and developing countries is discussed in a range of case studies published in a recent volume by Walters (1997).

A further point I wish to emphasise is the significance of new forms of knowledge and skills in the new capitalism. What Gee (2000: 185) calls 'sociotechnical designing' captures well the nature of semiotic work in tourism (see also Kress and van Leeuwen 1997). He speaks about the need for services and products that 'create or "speak" to specific consumer identities and values (niches)' as well as the requirement of 'designing ways to shape consumer identities and values through advertising and marketing' (Gee 2000: 185). Central to this is the increasingly common process of 'branding' (Klein 2001). Much of what the tourism industry does, seems to be pretty much this: it lures potential visitors into desiring to see new places, to experience new forms of travel and to spend money on new goods and services.

It appears that when a community camp site puts up a signboard next to the road and advertises for its 'natural showers' (see Khowarib's sign, Chapter 8, *Figure 8.1*) it fulfils the 'social and contextual and semiotic' work (Gee 2000: 184) that is needed in order to turn local places into tourist attractions. Whoever wrote the signboard, certainly used the right 'key words' (Dann 1996)[14]. They advertise 'showers', because they know that after a day of travelling through the dusty Namibian countryside, the typical European or American tourist craves nothing more than a shower. But those who come to Namibia also want to experience nature and they think of themselves as conservationists, so they will be thrilled to see that Khowarib's showers were built of local materials.

The semiotic work tourism workers need to fulfil is to learn the language of advertising, of commodities and consumption and the power of 'brands' and lifestyle images. I have discussed examples of this kind of semiotic work in Chapter 8. CBTEs are increasingly obliged to find their own marketing 'brand' within these politics of representation, if they want to survive in the tourism business. In their attempts to secure for themselves a niche in Namibia's

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[14] The campworkers could not tell me who wrote the sign.

dense tourism market, CBTEs begin to develop some kind of 'corporate identity', centred on the ideals of eco- and ethno-tourism. Although this may sound far fetched, it is not difficult to see here the first signs of a developing 'brand' around the ethos of community-based development and nature conservation in Namibia. 'No logo' (Klein 2001) does not seem to work, even for a people who are as peripheral to the centres of capitalist consumer production as the Himba!

The logo is fast becoming an indispensable attribute of communication world-wide. This development epitomises a kind of globalisation of literacy, a homogenisation of reading and writing and of communication more broadly that I already discussed in Chapter 8. Global markets increasingly lead to global and non-differentiated marketing. The logo is a particular good example, as names and brands, even in Namibia, appear to become an undeniable reality. These go from the Foschini brand, that stands for the achievements of the new black middle class, to the ever present Coca-Cola signs that have reached into the furthest corners of Windhoek's informal settlements. Other examples of such 'globalised' texts and forms of communication that I discussed in previous chapters are credit and store cards or the bureaucratic forms of public services.

The process of branding is closely associated with the construction of identity through words and images. In the case of Namibian tourism, this involves both the local population as well as the foreign guests. In the previous chapter I argued that since ethno-tourism has become fashionable in Namibia, easily consumable local identities have been created for the country's ethnic groups. But in a similar way, tourism marketing tries to influence the identities of tourists who buy into the lifestyle images of tourism brochures and willingly accept their roles as safari adventurers and cultural tourists.

Branding, as Naomi Klein argues, has created a 'logo-linked globe', a new global village, in which we are all connected to one another through webs of brands and the images and identities these promote. Logos, she continues,

'have become the closest we have to an international language' (ibid.: xx). Logos, then, are the prime example of 'global literacies' (Hawisher and Selfe 2000). But, as Klein argues, ultimately consumerism and the global web of brands, contribute to the narrowing of cultural choices (cf. Klein 2001: xvii and my earlier discussion in Chapter 8).

The impact of the global tourism industry and the structures of the New Work Order on local tourism development illustrates a form of power that is located not in the state, but in the realm of corporate authority and international economic structures. In a similar way, the forms of commercial literacy practices that I discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 are related to the decreasing influence of the state and the rising powers of consumer capitalism and multinational corporations (cf. Heertz 2001). Given that Namibia's overall economic strategy places its hopes on the creation of favourable conditions for foreign investment (National Planning Commission 1995), such wider global developments as summarised under the term New Capitalism are crucial to our understanding of the prospects of tourism to promote sustainable human and ecological development in Namibia.

7. More than the 'noble savage': what is the relationship between local tourism and the power of dominant tourism literacies?

In this and the previous two chapters, I have provided various examples of the strategies used by some local tourism workers to develop attractive and viable tourism businesses. The picture that emerges is that despite the difficulties they faced, the local tourism workers who were my informants were not the passive recipients of dominant tourism discourses, but fast learners in the New Capitalism and the New Work Order. They were skilful advertisers, eloquent guides and powerful manipulators of tourism discourses. This testifies to their agency.

But my enthusiastic tone only captures part of the picture and once again, the question of power in relation to literacy, to knowledge, identity and

discourse needs to be addressed. Despite their successes, local tourism enterprises faced many constraints and difficulties and I would be overly romantic if I portrayed their literacy practices as having much social and economic power. I am also conscious of my own tendency as a researcher and a 'follower' of the New Literacy Studies, to be too easily impressed by local diversity and to overemphasise the strategic potential of local or vernacular literacies.

The NLS have been criticised for their 'romantic' position[15]. Reading the many impressive studies of local literacy practices that are now available, the tendency of these accounts to cherish the power of local literacy springs to attention[16]. My own reservations regarding the otherwise more than legitimate attempt of the NLS to draw attention to the richness of local literacy practice, is that they run the danger of being locked in an outsider's discourse. However, the researcher's view may not necessarily coincide with local people's own understanding and their critical assessment of their own literacy practices. At the same time, researchers, despite their attempts to understand the local situation, always run the risk of misjudging the constraints local people face. They may underestimate the influence of powerful discourses and their associated literacies on local identities, an issue that is highlighted by Collins and Blot (forthcoming).

Tourism may be particularly suited to show both the qualities as well as the limitations of local literacy practices that are part and parcel of people's lifeworld. The constraints become evident when we consider who controls the discourses and the knowledge bases tourism literacies stem from (see my discussion in Chapter 8). As I argued earlier, many of the tourism literacy practices that I presented in the previous and in this chapter, are prepared and used with little or no input from those whom they centrally affect.

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15 See Street's reaction to this criticism in Prinsloo and Breier (1996).

16 An example is Kell's account of the literacy practices of an unschooled activist in an informal settlement in the Cape (Kell 1994, 1995, 1996).

What, then, was the position of local actors in tourism and how much space did groups like Face-to-Face have to shape tourism literacy practices according to their own needs and desires? The examples I have provided here can only give a rather small glimpse at the complex processes of domination, alignment and appropriation that seem to be going on. However, some indicative conclusions can be drawn.

Undoubtedly, at present the Himba have little if any role to play in the production of the 'Lonely Planet's' pages on Kaokoveld. In that sense, they are not agents. But they are central 'objects' of these literacies that impose a specific social role on the Himba. An immediate conclusion that could be drawn from the above is that many tourism literacy practices, especially promotional ones as opposed to the more specific literacy tasks such as writing an invoice or making a reservation, are by and large controlled by the literacy experts of the tourism industry. But are local communities nevertheless in a position to extract benefit from these dominant tourism literacies or even to change them?

In practice, it appears that local tourism workers and community-based tourism enterprises are not entirely without any stake in the production and use of tourism related texts and documents. In this and the previous chapter, I described how the CBTEs with whom I worked sought the support of literacy mediators, including myself, in order to help them with this task. Furthermore, I gave many examples of how local community-based tourism enterprises created their own versions of the dominant tourism images, for example when they set up signs to attract tourists to their sites and produced leaflets and brochures that they distributed to visitors.

There is, however, a significant difference between the ability to produce signs and leaflets that respond to the privileged gaze of the tourists, i.e. the skills to re-produce such dominant views, and the ability to define what forms tourism in Namibia should take, for example by deciding the particular ways in which local people and local history are to be presented in a tourism brochure.

The arrival of tourism, as I argued earlier, is part of much broader processes of cultural and social change (Nash 1996; Chambers 2000). These shifts bring with them a range of powerful discourses and policies over which local people have limited control. Whereas Face-to-Face Tours found themselves incorporated into the Municipalities' affirmative action and black empowerment discourse, the community-based tourism enterprises in rural areas are surrounded by conservation discourses and the sustainable development agenda which is promoted by government and foreign donors. As both groups faced pressures to gain an income and create a living in an environment that had little to offer, they had few choices but to accept these.

The question that remains is whether these new discourses can increase the space for communities to develop their own agenda with regards to social and economic prosperity? And, what are people's real agendas? There is no doubt that the conservancy policy in Namibia has helped to shift decision-making powers regarding local development and tourism towards the communities. But as similar projects in other countries[17] and experiences with conservancies and tourism development in communal lands in Namibia have shown, the label of eco-tourism may not always be rewarding to local economic interests and conflicts between different stakeholders' interests easily arise (cf. Sullivan 2001).

The community idea is a particularly popular concept in Namibian development policies. It has much resonance in donor policies and national priorities as it signals attempts to redress the inequalities created by the colonial and apartheid structures. 'Community-based' is a much used phrase in Namibian tourism and development discourse. Policy documents frequently mention the social and economic benefits of tourism for local communities and emphasise the need to distribute any income among the entire community (MET 1994, 1995a and b).

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17 For example Zimbabwe's campfire projects (Bird 1997).

There are examples of how community groups and individuals have used these labels to fit their own interests. CBTEs use popular logos and keywords that are easily recognised by tourists and help to gain access to NGO and donor support. The campsite outside of Opuwo for example is called the 'Kunene Village Rest Camp'. It uses NACOBTA's label on its signpost (see next page *Figure 9.2*). However, the campsite, although associated with NACOBTA, is not a community-based enterprise, nor is it linked in any direct way to a particular village. In fact, it is owned by a private businessman from outside the region. The CBTE ideology resonates well with many westerners' idea of the 'African' community as a group of people who share the benefits of development. And this attracts tourists. But, as we can see here, what is labelled as a community-based enterprise, may be no such thing.

Figure 9.2: Signpost for the Kunene Village Rest Camp

The camp in Opuwo is not the only CBTE that is run by a private person. The camp site of Aba-Huab, located close to the well known rock engravings of Twyfelfontein, is also managed by an individual. Face-to-Face is the initiative of a group of young people from Katutura. What is interesting about these cases is not the morals attached to community participation, but the fact that the 'language' once again seems to work. The members of these enterprises have recognised the power of the community label and they market themselves as communitarian businesses; this may be part of their success.

But at the same time, they do not comply with the idea of a community-managed enterprise that shares all its profits. These, then, are examples of how local people have appropriated the available discursive resources, entered the semiotic game and market their enterprises according to the current tourism fashion.

And yet, and this is my conclusion, what I found in my research is numerous examples of how my informants adapted to and re-produced the dominant discourses of tourism. They did so in an attempt to access the new opportunities they expected tourism to provide. People did not reject tourism, but tried to benefit from it. How Face-to-Face Tours reacted to the Municipality's offer for training may exemplify how many local tourism businesses tried to make the best use of available opportunities, in what ever linguistic or ideological dress these were presented to them. In much the same way, learners in Windhoek tried to make the best out of what opportunities were available to them, by using government loans, credit schemes or by becoming a learner in the NLPN.

Throughout my research in Namibia, I observed how my informants seemingly colluded with dominant discourses and practices. But they did so in such a way that I see their active agency and their strategies to gain from these what there was to be gained. However, in an institutional and discursive environment that they hardly knew, groups like Face-to-Face Tours were not always as successful in asserting their views as they wanted to. The guides did get sponsorship from the Municipality for a training course. However, as they told me, its content was largely dictated by the Municipality's and their trainers' priorities. When I left the country in September 2000, the groups' negotiation with Zanne regarding their role as city tour guides had not yet come to any conclusive arrangements.

8. Tourism literacy practices in Namibia: summary and conclusions

In this final section, I want to summarise the main points that emerged from my analysis of tourism literacy practices in this and the previous chapters. First, as Chambers (2000) has noted, tourism is in many ways a mediated activity and the role of written texts in the communication between guests and hosts is a key part of such mediation. As a consequence, increased tourism leads to a proliferation of new literacy practices in areas that, although not having been without literacy, previously may not have known these rather specific reading and writing practices. On the other hand, these literacies resemble the new global reading and writing practices of consumerism, some of which I discussed earlier in this thesis. As I have shown in Chapter 6, such social practices and their associated literacies are no longer a novelty to Namibians, a further illustration of the globalisation theme to which I frequently refer.

A second characteristic of many tourism literacies is that they are complex combinations of texts, visuals and other semiotic means. As such, 'reading' them is not a simple affair of decoding letters and words. Contrary to what is often assumed, the meaning of visuals is far from straightforward, but socially encoded. The ability to 'decode' such texts and to produce similar 'texts' is an essential requirement for local tourism workers.

Tourism literacy practices are grounded in the powerful imagery and strong metaphors of skilfully fabricated tourism discourses. As such, they are part of the globalising forces of dominant communicative practices that come along with the branding and Disneyfication of the world. In the Namibian case, inequalities within the tourism sector that from the start were patterned by strong hierarchies inherited from the colonial and apartheid past have been reinforced by the new structures of the national tourism industry and its connections with tourism enterprises world-wide. In this context, global developments in the patterns of work and employment had a direct bearing on local conditions.

Under such circumstances, local literacies and local discourse practices did not easily stand up against these semiotic and structural forces, more so as those who possessed local literacies in most cases did not dispose of the economic capital that could make it possible for them to compete with the strength of global tourism literacies. The question to ask is who, besides the old white elite, prospers from the new tourism literacies?

Quite understandably, in the above situation, the primary goal of the local tourism workers with whom I worked was to gain access to these communicative resources, a desire that compelled them to emulate dominant literacy practices rather than to resist, challenge or transform these. If there were few traces of a strongly transformative agenda that sought to challenge dominant literacy and discourse practices, this was because local people's main agenda was one of survival and trying to make a living out of what was available. Crucially, their attempts were located within the current framework of opportunities rather than outside, in alternative projects.

The question that remains is what kind of support and resources would be most helpful to local tourism workers in order to enhance local tourism development. More precisely, what could be the role of a literacy programme or a literacy-related training initiative in supporting local tourism workers and community-based tourism enterprises? In the following chapter, I will come back to the National Literacy Programme in Namibia and take a closer look at the discourses that shape teaching and learning in the classes. In the final chapter of the thesis, that preceeds the conclusion, I will compare these with the discourses of education and training that affect the situation of local tourism workers. I will ask how the literacy discourses of the NLPN relate to the meanings and uses of reading and writing in tourism as well as in everyday life.

PART IV: LITERACIES 'INSIDE' AND 'OUTSIDE'

10. A SCHOOL FOR ADULTS? LITERACY PRACTICES IN THE NLPN

1. Introduction

Having spent the previous six chapters tracing the maze of everyday life and work-related uses of literacy in Namibia, I now turn to the uses and meanings of literacy in the classrooms of the NLPN. In doing so, I finally move from the 'outside' to the 'inside' of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia. As in the previous chapters, my emphasis will be on the role of literacy in relation to discourses and to the construction and negotiation of identity.

Yet my move is not as radical as it may sound. The literacy programme, although never centre stage, was present all through the previous chapters. At the same time, as I argued in Chapter 4, what is happening in the classes is not completely disconnected from the everyday life uses and understandings of literacy that I described earlier in this thesis. How teaching and learning proceed is the result of a range of public and lifeworld discourses that interact with the discourses of literacy promoted by the NLPN. It is to this encounter between discourses, as it was played out in different literacy groups, that I will now turn my attention.

My aim is twofold: first, to understand how reading and writing is used in the classrooms and second, to find out how literacy is connected with specific ways of teaching and learning and with distinct forms of knowledge. The way I approach this is by foregrounding the discourses that frame reading and writing in the classes of the NLPN, the social relationships within which these are enacted and the broader contexts of which the classes are part. By doing so, I follow the same approach as in previous chapters: I firmly embed literacy practices in their social and discursive environment.

The remaining parts of the chapter are structured in the following way. The first section following this introduction deals with the discursive meanings of literacy in the NLPN that are evident in policy documents, government statements, teacher handbooks, primers, textbooks and literacy songs. I then turn to the literacy classes. I come back to Albertine's, Sofia's and Ana's stories and their aspirations for learning. At the same time, I bring in two other literacy groups, both from Katutura, whose reasons for attending the NLPN and whose desires for learning were quite different from the group I described in Chapter 4.

I discuss how in each of these literacy classes literacy and learning is constructed in a specific manner. In order to explain how this is done, I have to delve into the everyday life meanings and uses of literacy that I have described earlier in this thesis, thereby building the link with my previous chapters. I complement the picture of everyday life literacies by adding a new domain: reading and writing in religious contexts.

The central issues that emerge from this exercise are the following. A multiplicity of discourses is present in the classes. Learners constantly engage with and align themselves with the discourses of the NLPN. But at the same time, they bring their own lifeworld discourses into the classes. This set of 'outside' values and cultural meanings substantially alters teaching and learning in the classrooms and is responsible for great variations between different literacy groups[1].

2. Literacy – your key to a better future?
The discursive framework of the NLPN

What is the concept of literacy running through the National Literacy Programme?

The central idea that underpins the policy of literacy and education adopted by the NLPN is the link between literacy and development. As I briefly explained in Chapter 2, this has been a prominent perspective in national and international literacy discourses ever since the emergence of 'illiteracy' as a widespread policy concern after the end of the Second World War. The assumption that feeds this discourse is the positive impact literacy should have on economic development.

The belief in the capacity of literacy to improve people's lives is eloquently expressed in the NLPN's most prominent slogan. 'Literacy – your key to a better future' is a powerful 'mobilising metaphor' (Shore and Wright 1997: 3) that is artfully employed by the programme in order to attract new learners. During the celebrations for National Literacy Day in September 1999, the slogan was painted on a huge banner that was carried by a group of learners and teachers from the programme. A year later, at the same occasion, T-shirts carrying the same slogan, had been printed for all those who participated in the festivities.

Behind these fine sounding words stands the government's powerful vision of literacy as a motor for individual and national development. According to this official view, the main goals of literacy are economic and social development, building democracy and citizenship and reconciliation (MEC 1993; DABE 1994a, 1997; Mushi 1999). Underlying the government's discourse is a model of literacy that resembles the functional view of reading and writing promoted by UNESCO and other international bodies since the 1960s (see Chapter 2).

> Of course literacy is also a basic skill without which it is difficult to add the modern skills of agriculture and industry which we now promote as a nation.

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1 'Literacy group' is the term used by the NLPN to refer to what many of the learners and promoters called their 'class'. In the following, I use the terms 'class' or 'literacy class' and 'literacy group' as synonyms.

> It (literacy) makes possible better communication which is often at the core of progress and development (Sam Nujoma, quoted in DABE 1994a).

The above statements are part of a speech by Sam Nujoma, President of Namibia. Whilst a modernisation theory underlies both quotes, the first statement also reveals the central position of economic development in the Namibian government's thinking about literacy (DABE 1994a, 1997). Although the contribution that illiterate people make to their own income is acknowledged, it is assumed that for adults to become active participants in the economy, a certain level of literacy is required.

A similar point about the link between literacy and economic development is reiterated in statements that refer to the country's inherited inequalities and its 'backlog' in development, due to its colonial past. In this context, literacy takes on a particular significance: it is supposed to help remedy the injustices of the colonial and apartheid system and to foster reconciliation. According to one of its external evaluators, the NLPN

> was part of the government initiatives to redress the apartheid policies; to seek reconciliation of interests of various races, cultures and classes as well as 'backlogs' which were seen as an obstacle to national development initiatives (Mushi, quoted in Kweka and Jeremiah-Namene 1999: 23).

The above quotes show that the state constructs literacy primarily as an autonomous skill which many of its citizens are presumed to lack. This deficit discourse is rooted in the concept of human resource development as a prerequisite and motor for social and economic progress.

Furthermore, the NLPN's concept of literacy emphasises personal or self-development. Crucially, the NLPN heavily focuses its efforts on the individual's capacity to enhance her position within the current system. The government regards it as its responsibility to put at the citizens' disposal the education and training facilities that are presumed to make this change happen. Accordingly, literacy is framed as a constitutional right (MEC 1993). It is assumed that those who take up the opportunity to improve their literacy skills, will gain social, cultural and economic capital. In other words, they are

expected to gain power. In this view, literacy is conceptualised as an autonomous entity, while power is regarded as a property (Street 2001c), leaving untouched the relational aspects of power.

Those Namibians who are assumed to lack literacy, i.e. those deemed to be in 'deficit', are expected to come forward to the NLPN and to take up the opportunity the NLPN provides. Those who don't will be blamed for their wrong attitude and their social disadvantage. Accordingly, the policy of individual rights to education is accompanied by a focus on responsibility. Again, the individual is placed centre stage in this policy framework. As 'modern' citizens, Namibians are 'invited' to take up the opportunities for self-development the government provides. This was clearly expressed in a speech by the Minister of Labour, held at National Literacy Day, September 1999 (cf. Papen 2001). Learning to read and write in the NLPN thus becomes a matter of personal effort and motivation, a perspective that ignores the social and structural explanations for both poverty and 'low' literacy.

Behind the seemingly shared goals of literacy and education, 'dividing practices' (Foucault 1972) emerge that result in normalisation and categorisation. A clear line is set between those who are presumed to possess basic reading and writing skills and those who have attended primary school for less than four years and are therefore automatically considered illiterate (MBEC 1999). Furthermore, those who are seen to be illiterate and show no inclination to attend the programme are stigmatised. Betts (2001) has found that a similar position underlines the government of El Salvador's thinking about literacy. As in Namibia, in El Salvador the official discourse of literacy classifies those deemed to be 'illiterate' as uneducated and lacking an understanding of their duties as modern citizens to contribute to their own and their nation's development. In this way, responsibility for failure to attain the desired level of literacy and 'modernity' is placed on the individual.

Crucially, the above stance sees the deficit embedded in the individual, rather than in his or her current situation or her prior learning experience (cf. Edwards 2001). Concomitantly, the kind of learning programme envisaged in

the NLPN centres on enabling the individual, at the expense of promoting any form of collective and critical engagement with current structural inequalities. Referring to adult education policies in the UK, Edwards argues that as a result of the individualist orientation of adult education, literacy invariably becomes a functional tool whose primary purpose is to explain and to mitigate the individual's exclusion or marginalisation from the current system. A similar argument can be made about literacy policy in Namibia. Kell (2001), commenting on current literacy policy in South Africa, calls this policy uni-dimensional, leaving little or no room for a critical engagement with literacy as it is used in various domains of work and everyday life.

The Namibian government's model of literacy presumes that what learners need most is access to dominant literacy practices. Accordingly, the primary aim of the NLPN is not a change in the status quo, i.e. in the current constellation of dominant and marginalised literacies, but to improve the individual's ability to gain access to and profit from dominant literacy practices. This can be seen most clearly in the way the NLPN privileges academic knowledge and formal qualifications, through its policy of equivalency which allows graduates of the NLPN to continue their education in the formal system.

Within the programme's overarching theme of literacy and development, several smaller discursive strands appear. The significance of literacy in relation to work and income-generation is one such strand. It is emphasised in policy speeches and government documents (see for example MEC 1993; DABE 1994a and 1997; Papen 2001). In the teaching materials, considerable space is given to work-related situations and work skills, for example in textbooks on agriculture and micro-businesses that have been produced for Stages 3 and 4.

Reconciliation and nation-building, referred to earlier, are further prominent themes in the NLPN. Ideologically, reconciliation is subsumed under the broader programme goals of development. Reconciliation is supposed to be achieved, among other things, through a more equitable development that

would make large parts of the population content with their situation and happy to be part of the new Namibia (cf. DABE 1997; Mushi 1999; Tegborg 1996). Literacy, in this context, is regarded as a unifying cause.

Under the overarching frame of development, discourses of school and formal education are given a particularly prominent place in the NLPN, largely determining the curriculum. The programme aims to provide education that is equivalent with formal primary schooling. Whilst the first four stages concentrate on typical development themes such as health, sanitation and agriculture, subsequent stages, the Adult Upper Primary course (Stages 5 to 7), focus on academic subjects. The curriculum for the course was developed based on the syllabi of the corresponding primary school grades[2]. I will discuss school discourses in more detail later in this chapter.

The above policy discourses of the NLPN, far from remaining locked in policy documents and Ministry guidelines, penetrate all levels of the programme, from training sessions for future District Literacy Officers to promoters' handbooks and learners' textbooks. Through policy speeches and radio announcements, the same discourses are disseminated into local communities and people's lifeworlds. In the classes, they are continuously presented to learners via the content of the textbooks and the types of literacy practices that dominate teaching and learning (see below).

Many learners are also familiar with the literacy songs that promoters learn during their initial training and use during their lessons. When I visited a literacy group for the first time, the classes often performed literacy songs for me. Two of the other groups I visited in summer 2000 spent regular time practising literacy songs for National Literacy Day. These songs reiterate the belief in literacy as a key to the future.

One popular song is the following:

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[2] This was revealed to me while I helped with the production of new syllabi for some of the AUPE modules. We used the primary school syllabi as models on the basis of which new syllabi were developed.

Literacy, oh literacy

Why are you so lovely?

We love you literacy

You are our future.

We want to carry you out
to all corners of the country.

We love you literacy

You are our future.

With their powerful images, literacy songs such as the one above are influential statements of inclusion and exclusion, of 'us' and 'them'. The identity of being a 'learner' is artfully promoted by the paternalistic voices of the NLPN that are disseminated through the programme's songs and slogans. As I have shown in Chapter 4, many participants readily embrace this identity that resonates well with their longing for an education which they were deprived of in their youth.

The songs, as well as the textbooks, which I have not discussed in any detail here, carry in them the ideologies of the literacy programme. They serve as powerful strategies to promote the dominant voice of the programme. Literacy, in this particular context, is both a discourse in itself as well as a discursive tool to persuade Namibians of the government's vision of reading and writing. This is an example of how a particular policy, in this case the literacy policy of the Namibian government, attempts to promote specific identities and to shape people's conduct.

If the literacy discourses of the NLPN appear to be an almost overpowering ideological force, in reality, among learners and during the lessons, these discourses are less obviously influential than one might assume. There is, as I will show in the following sections, engagement with and acceptance of these discourses, but also a great deal of reorientation and change.

3. Reading the bible: literacy and religious discourses

In this and the following section I discuss three literacy classes that I visited regularly during my stay in Namibia in 1999 and 2000. I chose these three classes because they amply illustrate some of the trends in people's reactions to new and powerful literacy practices that I have discussed throughout this thesis. The learners in Anna's, Hilda's and Monica's class demonstrate how learners in the NLPN adapted to and aligned themselves with dominant literacy practices, in this case the discourses of school that were prominent in the NLPN. In one case, Monica's class, one could even say that the group contributed to the hegemony of these discourses in the programme. At the same time, however, these three literacy groups did not simply accept the discourses of the NLPN, but filtered out from them what best fitted their own priorities and agendas (cf. Rogers 2001). More importantly, they brought their own lifeworld discourses into the lessons, thereby substantially altering the content and the process of teaching and learning in their classes. These processes most strongly demonstrate these learners' active agency and the role their own identities and discourses played in shaping the implementation of the NLPN.

I will begin with several vignettes from my classroom observations.

I arrive at five to five and see Carolina and Elizabeth sitting on the side of the school building. Erna waits for me in the school yard. We go into the classroom and the lesson begins. We begin with a prayer. Elizabeth prays for us. We stand up while she speaks[3].

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[3] Fieldnotes, Hilda's class, Goreangab Junior Secondary School, Katutura, 19.6.2000.

This is the end of the lesson. As always, the final prayer. We stand up, form a circle, hold hands. Hans prays. Afterwards, we lift our hands up and all speak together: 'He will be with you always, until the end of time'[4].

... the lesson ends. Together, we read the Our Father. Each learner had a copy of the text from which they read aloud[5].

The above are extracts from fieldnotes taken during visits to two classes in Katutura. In both groups it was common to pray at the end of the lesson. In Hilda's class, each lesson began and ended with a prayer. Learners took turns with the prayers, but at times the opening prayer was said by Hilda, the teacher.

Hilda's class was an evening group that met in a secondary school in the central area of Katutura, in the former Nama section. The school was located next to a Protestant church. Most learners were members of this congregation and Hilda was a church elder in the same church. Anna's class, who read the Our Father, met at the state hospital in Katutura. Most of its participants were cleaners in the hospital. The lessons took place during the cleaners' lunch hour. When I first met Hilda's group in 1999, hers was a Stage 3 literacy class. A year later it was changed into a multi-stage class that included a Stage 2 and a Stage 4 sub-group. The class in the hospital was also a multi-stage class, including learners who were in Stage 3 and others who were in Stage 4.

Both classes had about eight to ten regular participants, the majority of whom were women. The oldest learner was in his sixties, the youngest a boy of about twelve years old. With a few exceptions, all had been to school, but most had not stayed for more than two or three years.

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[4] Fieldnotes, Hilda's class, Goreangab Junior Secondary School, Katutura, 4.10.1999.

[5] Fieldnotes, Anna's class, Katutura State Hospital, 5.6.2000.

My interest in religious practices and the role of reading and writing as part of these activities developed from my observations in these two groups. In both literacy groups, in particular in Hilda's class, religious discourses played a significant role. On the initiative of learners and teachers, religious literacy practices were taken into the classroom.

Learning prayers and songs was a regular part of Hilda's teaching. Anna's two sub-groups had asked her to teach them the Our Father in English. She had copied the text and duplicated it for each learner (see next page *Figure 10.1*). The group had agreed that each participant would try to learn the text by heart. On one occasion, I witnessed how they tried to learn the text. The two sub-groups, which normally worked separately, had come together. First, Anna asked several of the learners to try to recite the text for the others. Afterwards, they all read it together[6].

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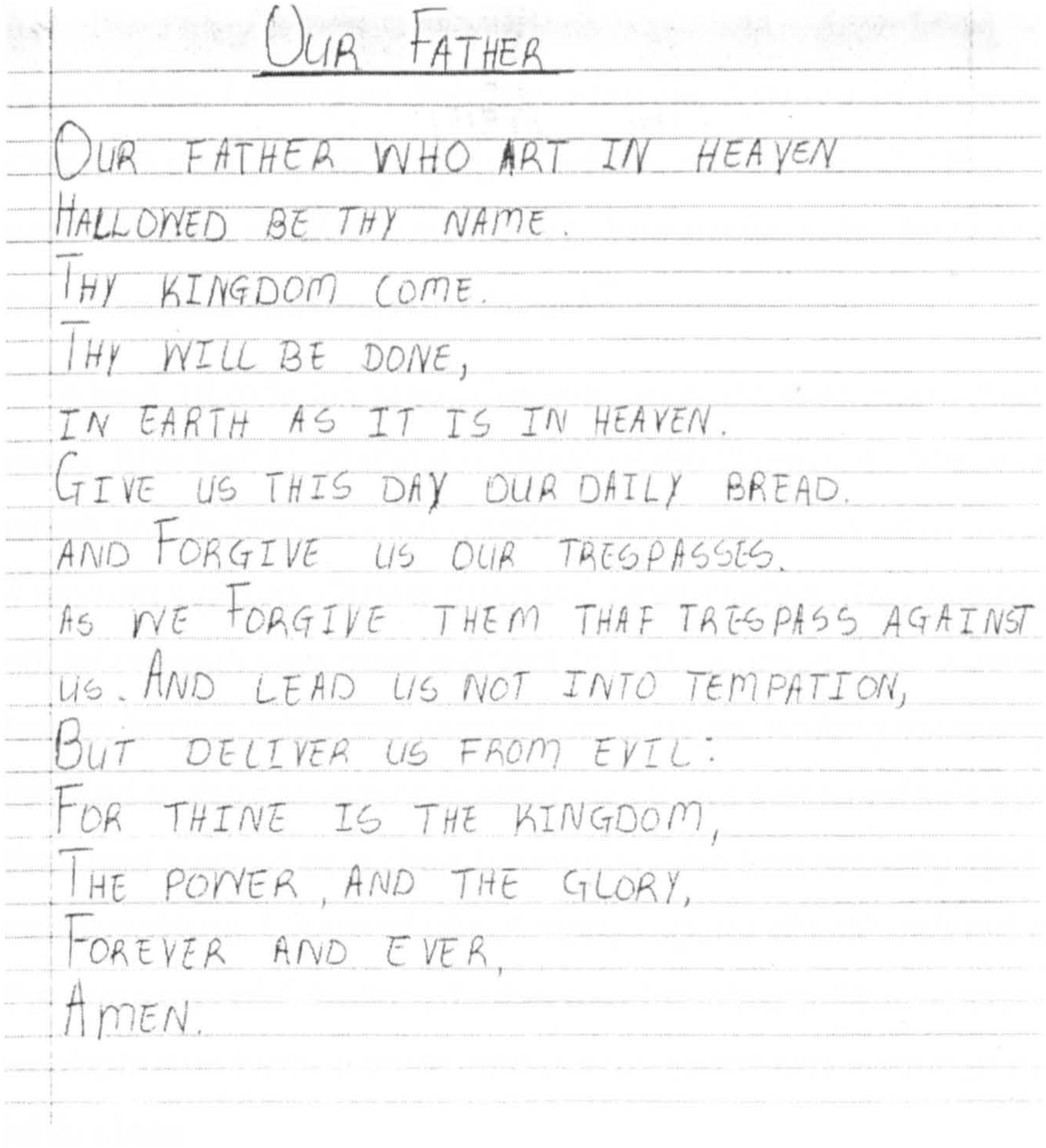
[6] Fieldnotes, Anna's class, Katutura State Hospital, 5.6.2000.



OUR FATHER

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN
HALLOWED BE THY NAME.
THY KINGDOM COME.
THY WILL BE DONE,
IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.
AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES.
AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST
US. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPATION,
BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL:
FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM,
THE POWER, AND THE GLORY,
FOREVER AND EVER,
AMEN.

Figure 10.1: Anna's copy of the Our Father

In Hilda's class, the Our Father was a regular part of the prayers. Sometimes, it was said by a learner, in the mother tongue. At other times, Hilda said it in English and everybody tried to join in. The group had asked Hilda to teach them the English text.

During the lesson, Hilda often referred to events in church. The following is an example of how Hilda used the group's shared religious identity in order to illustrate a point in her lesson. The scene comes from a lesson about shopping. The group was reading a dialogue from the Stage 3 Basic English textbook. Hilda started by reading parts of the dialogue and then asked the group to practice the same sentences.

Hilda reads: Can I help you. The class repeats. Hilda: Slowly, we mustn't rush. They try again. Hilda: And we must learn with our eyes how this word is written, while we read. You learn as you read. The group reads again, with

her. Then they continue, she reads first, they repeat: How much is the bag of flour? Hilda: I heard on Sunday in the choir, they sang I believe in Jesus Christ. But they were singing I 'beli' in Jesus 'Chri'. But that is now something else. Now we must say how much (she refers to the last sentence they read, they had said 'mu' instead of much[7].

About 15 minutes later, Carolina, one of the learners, had to leave the class. She had to attend a meeting of the Women's Missionary Group to which she belonged. Like Carolina, many learners were members of a choir or a woman's group. Others attended bible studies. The role of the church as a social network was most evident in Hilda's group. Many times, before the lesson began, while we were sitting outside, waiting for everybody to arrive, I listened to the group's conversations about last Sunday's service, a prayer they had learned or a church member who had recently died. In these same conversations, I learned about many regular church-related activities that filled the evenings of Carolina, Justus and the others. The women's group for example met twice a week and Justus spent two evenings every week in a bible class.

In none of the other literacy groups I visited during my fieldwork did religious practices play such a strong role as in Hilda's class. But many of the learners from other groups were also active members of their church, sang in a choir or attended bible lessons. Ana, for example, whose struggle with her electricity and water charges I recounted in Chapter 5 and whom I met in another Stage 4 class in Katutura, was also a church elder.

In interviews with learners, I asked whether their religious activities included any reading and writing. As a member of a choir, Emma learned songs in Khoekhoegowab, Afrikaans or English. In her choir, Dorothea learned songs in Oshikwanyama. She explained that they learned most new

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[7] Fieldnotes, Goreangab Junior Secondary School, Katutura, 30.5.2000.

songs from the hymn book. But sometimes the choir conductor gave them copies of songs from other books[8].

Emma also participated in her choir's bible lessons. Occasionally, she would be asked to prepare a verse or a prayer that she had to present and discuss for the group. These verses were taken out of a popular collection of daily texts for biblical study. Emma gave her presentations in Afrikaans or in Khoekhoegowab depending on the group members who were present[9].

As a church elder Ana had many responsibilities. When I interviewed her, she described to me how she prepares herself for a home funeral service. It is customary in Katutura, when a person dies, to hold several memorial services at the house of the deceased. Normally, the church elders are responsible for these home services. Ana explained how she chooses texts from the bible, from a collection of biblical verses and songs from the hymnbook for the services. She makes notes for herself, so that she knows how to conduct the prayers. While she writes her notes in her own language, Khoekhoegowab, the verse book she uses is in Afrikaans[10].

Apart from giving a glimpse of the multilingual nature of many literacy events in Katutura, the above examples illustrate the kind of occasions on which church members in Katutura used written texts. Furthermore, they reveal that for the learners in Hilda's and Anna's class, going to the literacy class was part of their regular evening activities. Although not a church-related group in the strict sense, the class had a similar status and role as for example the choir or the women's group.

The importance of the church in literacy learners' lives is also described by other researchers. In a study of the government's literacy programme in

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8 Interview with Dorothea, MBEC, Windhoek, 19.7.2000, translated from Oshindonga.

9 Interview with Emma, Katutura, 13.7.2000, translated from Khoekhoegowab.

10 Interview with Ana, Katutura, 31.7.2000, translated from Khoekhoegowab.

Ghana, Yates (1994) found that for many participants religious literacy practices were particularly important. There are also parallels between Breier's study in South Africa and my experiences in Katutura. She notes that learners value the fact that they now cope much better with religious literacy practices as an important achievement of their learning (Breier 1994: 105-6). As in Ocean View, the site of Breier's study, in Katutura many participants' motivation to join the literacy classes was related to their religious faith. Elizabeth told me that she could now open the bible or hymn book at the correct page, announced by the pastor. Justus, a dedicated member of his church and also a lay preacher, wanted to be able to communicate with the pastors from abroad who visited his congregation. He hoped that one day he would accompany his church on a visit to a partner church in Europe. Yates (1994) also points out a desire among literacy learners in Ghana to 'check' on the pastor's reading and interpretation of the bible.

Hilda added another important piece of information that helped me to better understand learners' reasons for attending the NLPN. This is what she told me:

H: I ask them what they want to do. Sometimes, they just want to read and write. But we talk, I tell them, about the water problem, about electricity, about housing. But they don't like it.

U: Why?

H: Because they want to read the bible and understand it and the hymns when they sing[11].

Several of the learners Hilda refers to in the above comment could read the bible in their mother tongue and in Afrikaans, but wanted to read the English text. Others joined her class because they wanted to learn to read the Bible in their own language.

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[11] Interview with Hilda 23.8.2000, interview conducted in English.

These learners' religious identities were based on their confidence in the authority of God. God was revealed to them through the words of the pastor and through the words of the Bible. Undoubtedly, Ana's authority as a church elder did not depend on her level of 'book learning' (Malan 1996b: 39), i.e. her formal education. But it was interesting to hear from Ana how she used literacy for her own duties. I was also struck by how much reading was involved in the religious activities of Justus, Carolina, Emma and others (see above). These learners acknowledged the Bible's authority as a source of knowledge. Therefore, being able to read the Scripture was important, even if it was very common to learn hymns and prayers by heart. For these learners, the Bible was more than a literacy artefact; because it did not only have symbolic value, it was also important to be able to read the text (cf. Kapitzke 1995).

Furthermore, Justus' desire to read the Bible in English reflects the fact that in Namibia English is nowadays more and more used in church, even if the services are normally conducted in local languages. As Herbert and Robinson (2001: 127) suggest, if English is regarded as a powerful language, using it for religious practices indirectly confirms the power of God and of church.

To conclude this section, I would argue that in Hilda's group and to a lesser degree in Anna's class, teaching and learning were to some extent re-contextualised into the discourses and practices of church and religion. These provided a common identity, similar dispositions towards learning and teaching and a set of communicative practices that although originating in a different context were successfully deployed in the classrooms.

Yet neither Hilda's nor Anna's group had at any point rejected the NLPN's curriculum or stopped using the textbooks. In both classes, the textbooks remained the main reference for teaching and learning. The groups did not reject the NLPN's discourse of school, rather they incorporated it into their religious identities.

The above examples highlight a degree of variability in the NLPN which one would not necessarily have expected from this centralised programme. Officially, all literacy classes are expected to follow the same curriculum. In practice, as the above examples show, variations do occur, as some literacy classes take their own initiatives. We can see here how the education discourses of the NLPN, which make little reference to religion, are altered by learners' own priorities.

Kahivere, a senior education officer in the Directorate of Adult Basic Education, who visited a Khoekhoegowab literacy class in Katutura over three-and-a-half months in autumn 1994, reports a similar development in this group. According to Kahivere, the group spent two hours every week reading the Bible and the hymn book. This happened following a decision by the group who found the primer 'insufficient' (Kahivere, no date: 44). Learners in this group were highly interested in learning how to read the Bible and how to read hymns from the book rather than having to memorise them. Reimer (quoted in Youngman 1997) noted a similar initiative by a group of learners from the national literacy programme in Botswana, also a centralised programme. He observed a literacy class where learners wrote and performed songs about their Christian faith and their learning.

The crucial insight that arises from the above is to what degree each literacy class becomes part of and is shaped by the institutional, social and discursive environment in which it is located. I made a similar argument in Chapter 4, when I discussed the literacy class in the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sports. Hilda's and Anna's classes are examples of how groups of learners in the NLPN did not simply absorb the programme as it was given to them. These groups' aspirations for learning, their lifeworld discourses and their identities had a decisive impact on how they confronted and mediated the programme and how for themselves they constructed the links between their own life and their participation in the classes. Hilda's and Anna's groups appropriated the discourses of the NLPN in a way that allowed them to match the programme with their' own identities as Christians and

active members of their parishes. This match was made comparatively easy because self-improvement and a positive orientation towards learning and education are values of the church as much as of the NLPN.

In other literacy classes, however, self-improvement was not expressed in religious terms. As I showed in Chapter 4, for the cleaners of the Ministry, self-development was primarily framed in a discourse of work, income and personal status. In the following section I will once again come back to Sofia, John and Christina and sit in their class, listening together with them to Monica, their teacher.

4. Tests, homework and exams: school practices in the NLPN

Monica (the teacher) starts by reading the topic and the instructions for Unit 21 on page 35. It will be like this all through the lesson: she reads the instructions, the questions, etc. (...). Before they start the exercise, she asks the group about some of the words which she believes they might not know. Then they do the exercise together. Monica reads the question from the textbook, one of the learners gives the answer. 'Thank you very much', Monica says, 'the answer is strike.'

When they finish the exercise, Monica asks the class again if they have understood all the words in the text. Irmela, who sits next to me, reads through the exercise again. Christina asks: 'Teacher, I want to ask something. Vowels. What is the meaning of the word?' Then somebody asks what the word persuade means. Monica: 'Another question? Please ask.' Most learners still look into their textbooks. 'Solution?' , somebody asks. Monica: 'Solution means when you solve, you got a problem, you do something to solve the problem.'

The lesson continues. Monica: 'Page 36. Now I want you all to read. Everybody can read one sentence. Then the next one starts.' Sofia starts with the first sentence. Monica: 'Ok, next.' When they finish reading the text, Monica reads the instructions for the exercise that follows the short text. She summarises and paraphrases the text they have read. In the instruction to the exercise that follows, it says 'Talk briefly about these questions' (p. 36). Monica reads the questions, but the group does not discuss them. What follows instead is a question/answer session. Christina answers all the questions. (...)

Later on in the lesson, the group does more exercises from the textbook, but now Monica tells the learners to do the exercise on their own, in their textbooks. Christina is the first to finish. When a learner has done the exercise, she gives it to Monica who will check the work she has done and

marks it with a red pencil. Others are still working. 'Who finished?', Monica asks a little later. 'I have finished long ago', she says minutes later, when many are still busy. 'Two more minutes', she then says. I see one of the better learners helping her neighbour. Another one is busy correcting the mistakes Monica had found. Then she asks Monica to check her exercise a second time[12].

The above excerpts from my fieldnotes were taken during a lesson of the Stage 4 class that met at the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. This was the class of Sofia and Irmela whom I introduced in Chapters 4. My notes begin after an introductory conversation between the learners and Monica, their teacher. Seven learners were present.

The above vignette illustrates what I believe to be aspects of a typical lesson in Monica's class. Whilst I observed similar practices and situations in all other groups I visited, time and again it was in Monica's class that I witnessed what I understand to be school practices and the use of school-related reading and writing exercises. In the following, I discuss examples of the 'schooling of literacy' (Street and Street 1991) as I found them in Monica's class.

If I chose Monica's group, this is not to suggest that their case is in any way representative of the NLPN. In fact, looking at all the literacy groups I visited during my fieldwork, it is evident to me that a great variety of situations and practices characterises the programme[13]. What Monica's class does seem to illustrate, however, is a tendency in the NLPN towards a relatively formal style of teaching, focused on academic performance and the central role of textbook knowledge. These are characteristics that in different forms and to various degrees I found in all the groups I visited. Nevertheless, I do

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[12] Fieldnotes, Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sports, Windhoek, 16.8.1999.

[13] The total number of classes I visited throughout my time in Namibia (17 altogether) cannot represent the diversity of situations and learners in the various

not seek to arrive in the following at any form of generalisation, but rather see these as 'telling cases' (Mitchell 1984) of important underlying principles.

Monica's class followed a strict timetable, a copy of which was hanging on the walls of the office where the group met. Mondays were reserved for teaching English, Tuesdays for mathematics and Wednesdays for agriculture and primary health care. For each day, the group used a different textbook. The idea of the timetable had been introduced by Esteva, Monica's predecessor. Esteva is a former primary school teacher.

Teaching and learning in this group appeared to be heavily 'textbook-based' (Brown et al. 1999) and teacher-focused. As the above vignette shows, during this lesson, the textbook was at the centre of all teaching and learning. Usually, a two hour lesson was developed around a unit or chapter in the textbook. The primary goal of a lesson was to help learners understand and memorise the knowledge contained in the respective chapter or unit. Typically, such a chapter begins with a short text or a dialogue followed by a series of exercises that can be done either orally or in writing. In a typical lesson, Monica read from the books, learners repeated or read on their own, they did the exercises, together in class, or, as happened frequently in the second part of the lesson, individually in writing.

In the above vignette, Monica, the teacher, holds a position of authority. Working from the textbook, she initiates questions, evaluates answers and assigns tasks. Textbooks, such as the book on primary health care, which Monica's group used, concentrate on imparting information and giving instructions. However, Monica's role was not so much that of provider of knowledge, but to pass on textbook knowledge to the learners. The main authority was grounded in the textbook. This was also reflected in the symbolical role of the textbooks during the lesson. Monica's lessons began when she took out the textbook from her bag and invited learners to open

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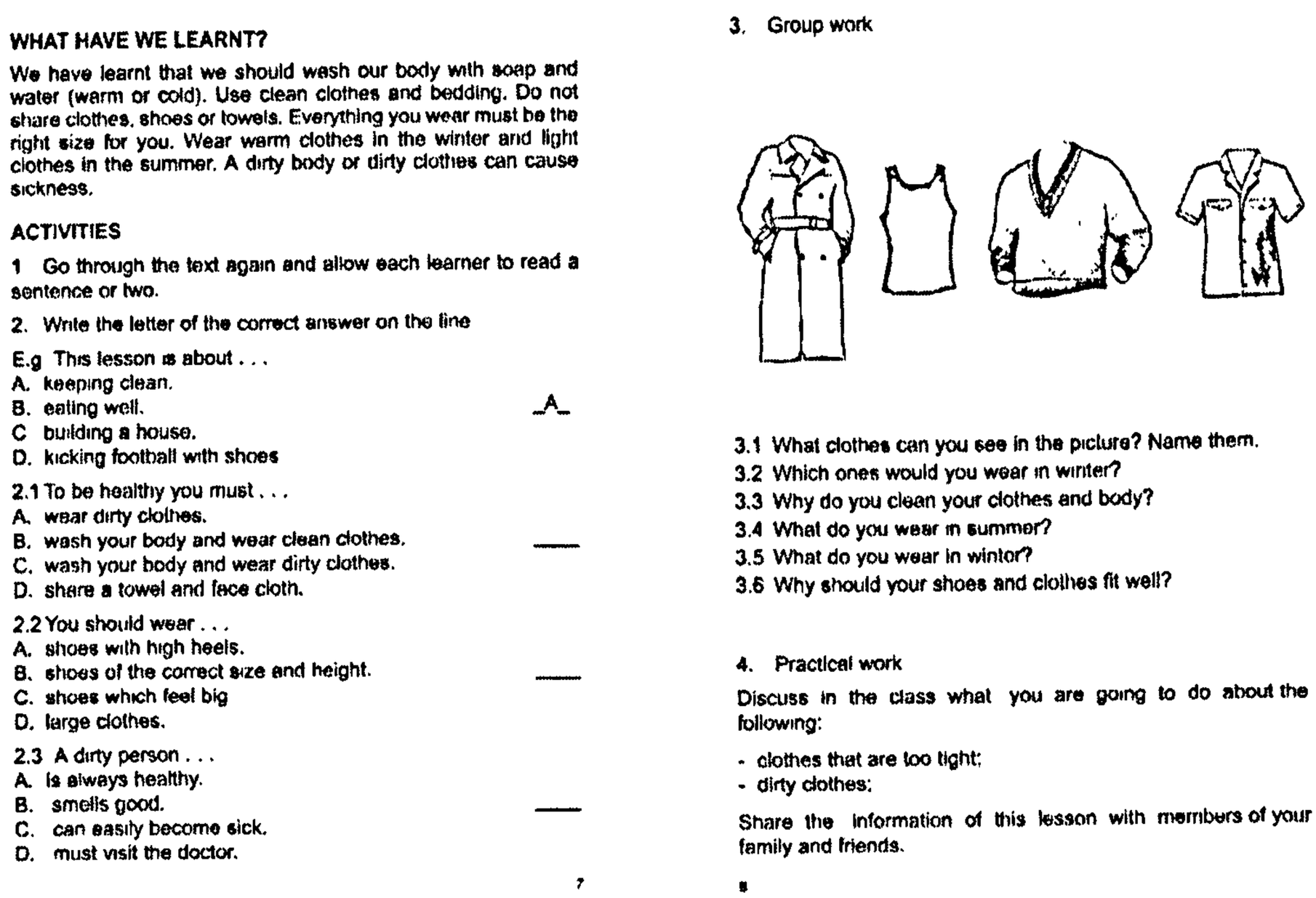
regions where the programme is implemented. The majority of the groups I visited were located in the urban area of Windhoek.

their books on a certain page. This ritual signalled the start of the formal classroom procedures.

Opening the textbook, reading from it or writing exercises in it are essential parts of 'procedural display' in the way Bloome et al. (1989) use the term. They argue that classrooms are cultural institutions, in the same way as banks, churches or supermarkets. How teaching and learning proceeds in the classroom is at least in part the result of the choice of values and cultural meanings made by teachers and learners (ibid.: 270). Lessons proceed based on behaviours that reflect these shared understandings. In Monica's class, one of the things that made a lesson a lesson was the use of the textbook. Monica and her group shared the understanding that the textbook was their primary source of knowledge.

Bloome and his colleagues suggest that through procedural display, such as for example questioning and recitation (the latter being common in the NLPN's classrooms too) the 'students may employ or learn strategies to get through a lesson rather than engage in the academic substance' (ibid.: 273). What interests me here is not the evaluative question raised by these authors, but the essential role of cultural meanings and the shared understanding of procedures in shaping the learning process. In order to become 'successful' learners, Christina, Sofia and the others needed to understand and apply these rules. In other words, they had to identify with being a learner in a 'school' for adults and to take on the behaviour and views associated with their role. Being an adult learner in a literacy or an English class, as Scribner and Cole (1981) have shown, then, is not only about learning letters, words, or grammatical rules. It requires the participant to acquire and deploy a particular set of discourses and behaviours. As part of the process of becoming a learner, Sofia, Christina and John learned how to position themselves in relation to external knowledge. They acquired the literacy practices that for them were associated with the classroom as a cultural institution. The core of these practices were the activities that centred around the textbooks, e.g. reading from the textbooks, copying words and sentences

from it and doing the exercises that each chapter contained (see next page *Figure 10.2*).



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

We have learnt that we should wash our body with soap and water (warm or cold). Use clean clothes and bedding. Do not share clothes, shoes or towels. Everything you wear must be the right size for you. Wear warm clothes in the winter and light clothes in the summer. A dirty body or dirty clothes can cause sickness.

ACTIVITIES

1 Go through the text again and allow each learner to read a sentence or two.

2. Write the letter of the correct answer on the line

E.g This lesson is about . . .
A. keeping clean.
B. eating well. _A_
C building a house.
D. kicking football with shoes

2.1 To be healthy you must . . .
A. wear dirty clothes.
B. wash your body and wear clean clothes. ____
C. wash your body and wear dirty clothes.
D. share a towel and face cloth.

2.2 You should wear . . .
A. shoes with high heels.
B. shoes of the correct size and height. ____
C. shoes which feel big
D. large clothes.

2.3 A dirty person . . .
A. is always healthy.
B. smells good. ____
C. can easily become sick.
D. must visit the doctor.

7

3. Group work

3.1 What clothes can you see in the picture? Name them.
3.2 Which ones would you wear in winter?
3.3 Why do you clean your clothes and body?
3.4 What do you wear in summer?
3.5 What do you wear in winter?
3.6 Why should your shoes and clothes fit well?

4. Practical work

Discuss in the class what you are going to do about the following:

- clothes that are too tight;
- dirty clothes;

Share the information of this lesson with members of your family and friends.

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Figure 10.2: Pages 7 and 8 from the Primary Health Care textbook Monica's class used

The reason why Monica's class 'worked' and why I saw the same learners coming again and again, sitting through two long hours, busily writing in their textbook, was that here, programme, teacher and learners not only shared a common goal but a common understanding of how this could be achieved.

In a similar way, both Hilda's and Anna's groups shared a set of identities, discourses and practices. But in their case, these did not originate in school knowledge and the idea of success in society through education alone, but were also shaped by the groups' religious identities and practices.

That the textbooks were an essential ingredient of a lesson was further revealed to me by various comments from learners and teachers. I noticed for example how frequently I was asked by learners from all classes, who knew about my contacts with the head office of the NLPN, if I could get some

textbooks for them. Regularly, both teachers and learners remarked on the lack of textbooks, which seemed strange, because in all the groups I visited there didn't really seem to be a shortage of books. I was also frequently asked by the groups if I knew which books they would work with, once they had finished with the textbooks they were currently using. These comments reveal how important the textbooks were for learners' identity. Furthermore, they illustrate to what extent the textbooks symbolised the idea of progress that was engrained in the concept of stages.

A comment made by Anna, the teacher of the group in the hospital, further illustrates the role of the textbooks. During June 2000, I noticed that very few of the Stage 4 learners attended the class regularly. When I asked Anna why they no longer came, she explained that this was because 'they know the books already'[14]. What she meant was that the group had finished working with the textbooks for Stage 4. Therefore, the learners believed they had finished the programme for this year. They would only come back when the exams started.

The importance of the textbooks for learners and teachers can further be explained by a number of factors that relate both to the material conditions in the programme as well as to learners' and teachers' dispositions towards school and 'book learning'. Firstly, most teachers did not have access to any other teaching materials. What is perhaps more important is that for both learners and teachers the textbooks represented what school knowledge was about. But the textbooks were not only seen as the primary source of knowledge, they were also important icons of the participants' identity as learners: the textbooks symbolised 'school'. As Christina's words in the above vignette show, for many learners the NLPN was their 'school' and the promoter their 'teacher'. What happened in the classroom was determined by these beliefs on the part of both learners and teachers, i.e. both participated in

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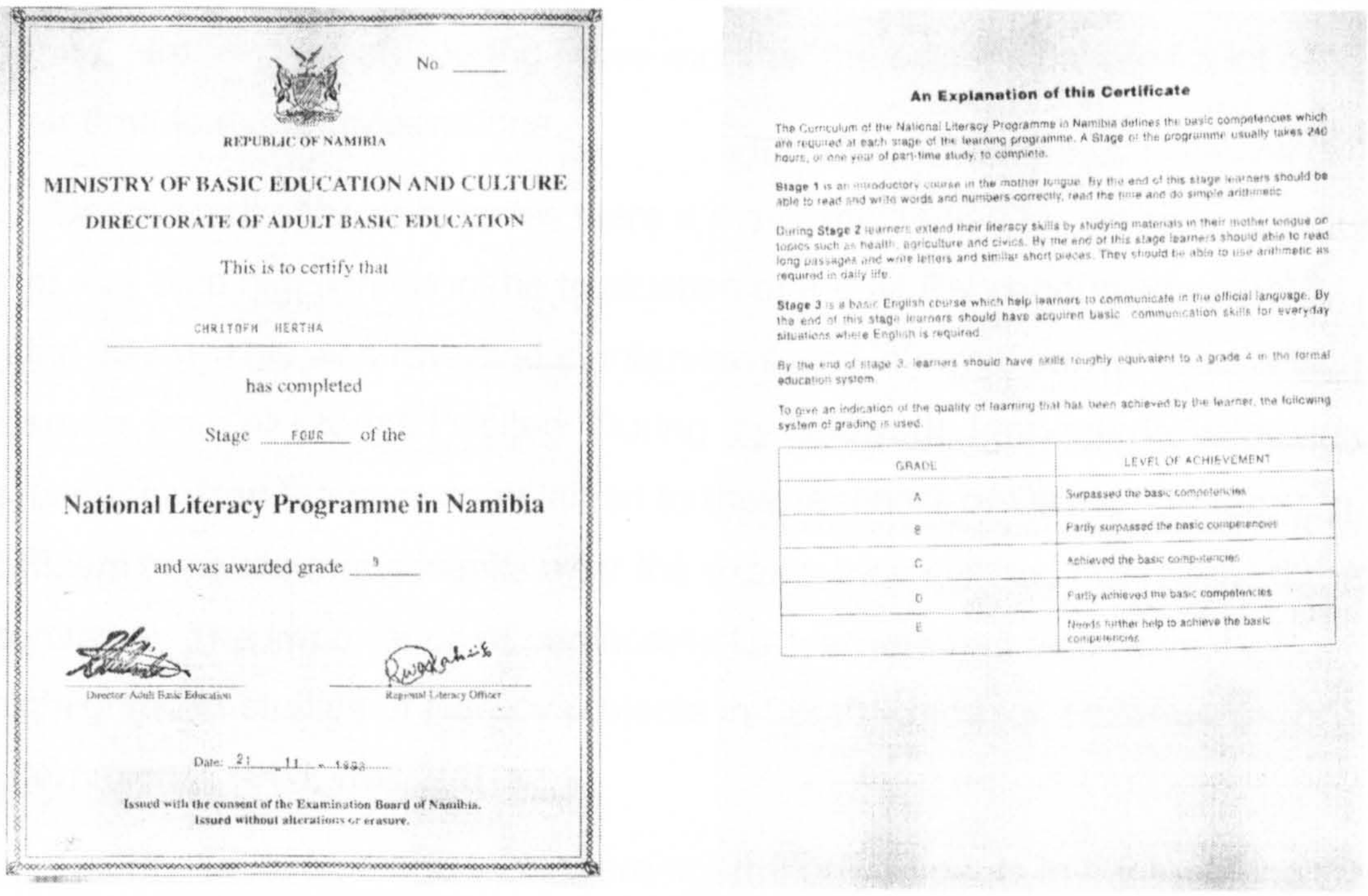
[14] Fieldnotes, Katutura Hospital, 5.6.2000.

the construction of 'schooled literacy' (Cook-Gumperz 1986; Street and Street 1991).

The practice of exams and certificates in the NLPN is an explicit reference to formal education. Each year, at the end of the NLPN's yearly programme, learners can sit an exam. If they pass, they receive a certificate (see next page *Figure 10.3*). Although theoretically they did not have to, in the classes I visited everybody was keen to take the exam. Taking tests and exams is another procedure that in learners' and teachers' eyes was essential to what 'doing school' was about.



No _____

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

DIRECTORATE OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

This is to certify that

CHRITOFH HERTHA

has completed

Stage FOUR of the

National Literacy Programme in Namibia

and was awarded grade D

Director: Adult Basic Education

Regional Literacy Officer

Date: 21 11 1998

Issued with the consent of the Examination Board of Namibia.
Issued without alterations or erasure.

An Explanation of this Certificate

The Curriculum of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia defines the basic competencies which are required at each stage of the learning programme. A Stage of the programme usually takes 240 hours, or one year of part-time study, to complete.

Stage 1 is an introductory course in the mother tongue. By the end of this stage learners should be able to read and write words and numbers correctly, read the time and do simple arithmetic.

During **Stage 2** learners extend their literacy skills by studying materials in their mother tongue on topics such as health, agriculture and civics. By the end of this stage learners should able to read long passages and write letters and similar short pieces. They should be able to use arithmetic as required in daily life.

Stage 3 is a basic English course which help learners to communicate in the official language. By the end of this stage learners should have acquired basic communication skills for everyday situations where English is required.

By the end of stage 3, learners should have skills roughly equivalent to a grade 4 in the formal education system.

To give an indication of the quality of learning that has been achieved by the learner, the following system of grading is used.

GRADE	LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT
A	Surpassed the basic competencies
B	Partly surpassed the basic competencies
C	Achieved the basic competencies
D	Partly achieved the basic competencies
E	Needs further help to achieve the basic competencies

Figure 10.3: Hertha's certificate

The exams further reinforced the role of the textbooks. In June and July, before the end-of-year exams took place, all the groups I visited sat a series of tests which were prepared by the teachers. The tests were supposed to prepare learners for the exams that were held later in August. Both tests and exams relied heavily on the textbooks and the groups knew that, in order to pass the tests, they needed to have understood and memorised the content of the lessons they had been working on throughout the year.

Monica's class spent a lot of time revising lessons and preparing for the end of year exams. I attended several lessons whose sole purpose it was to revise the chapters contained in each textbook the group had used over the past year. Repeatedly, learners emphasised how important the exams and the certificates were for them. Accordingly, Monica adapted her programme to suit the demands of her class. While her class seemed to be particularly focussed on the exams, revisions and tests were a common practice in all classes I visited. I am, however, aware of a possible bias in my data on tests and exams. This is simply because both in 1999 and 2000, I spent most of my time in Namibia during the months which lead to and included the examination period. Not surprisingly, during these months, the classes devoted a lot of their time to exam preparations.

Undoubtedly, the certificates were a major motivation for learners, a point that was also highlighted in the evaluation of the NLPN conducted in 1995 (Lind 1996). This was revealed in interviews and informal conversations with learners from all groups I visited. During my fieldwork, I repeatedly witnessed situations when learners complained to their teachers or District Literacy Officers because many weeks after the exams they still had not received their certificate. The importance of certificates for learners has also been highlighted in studies of literacy projects in South Africa (cf. HelpAge International 1998; Kell 2001).

Textbooks, exams and tests were not the only aspects in the teaching that were reminiscent of formal education. There were a range of other attributes that had been adapted from schools. These are further examples of the kind of schooled literacy practices that were commonly used in all the classes I visited. One such practice was writing down the day's date. All literacy groups had a blackboard. Whenever the teachers used it, they began by writing the date in the upper right-hand corner of the board. Learners did the same, when they used their exercise books. The reason why I associate this with school in Namibia is because each time I entered the secondary school classroom where Hilda's group met, the black board was still covered with the morning's

lessons. Strikingly, the day's date was always written in the top right-hand corner of the board.

The practice of marking learners' exercises, as seen in the above vignette, is another school practice which was commonly used in the adult classes of the NLPN. Some teachers, like Monica, even signed the exercises. When she corrected the written exercises learners did during a lesson, she usually gave learners marks such as '5/10' or '10/10'. To this, she often, added a comment, like 'very good' or 'good'. Monica always used a red pencil.

The environment in which the groups met and the use of typical school materials such as red pencils reinforced the school orientation of these classes. In Katutura, most literacy groups met in school classrooms. The promoters, many of whom were former school teachers, trainee teachers or young school leavers, contributed to the formality of classroom procedures. In some groups, the presence of children further supported the 'schoolish' atmosphere of the lesson. Some of the youngsters raised their hands and waited for the teacher to invite them to speak before they made a contribution. The adults in the group normally did not do this, but occasionally some of them adopted the habit.

What does all this tell us about the cultural models of learning and of reading and writing in Monica's class? Undoubtedly, the notion of skills was central to the entire teaching and learning process in this group. Furthermore, the belief in the textbooks as the provider of knowledge and skills and the importance of the exams and tests for learners' and teachers' understanding of their task shaped how a lesson was done. Crucially for the success of this class, participants' own ideas of their learning did not contradict, but matched with the curriculum's emphasis on skills and 'essay-text literacy' (Kell 1995). As explained in Chapter 4, the learners' main goal was access to school literacies that were seen as a gateway to social status and economic success. In that sense, learners' own discourses supported the NLPN's views on literacy and education. In this group, then, the 'inside' discourses of the NLPN corresponded with learners' 'outside', i.e. their lifeworld discourses.

Accordingly, the classes did not present learners with an isolated activity and were not disconnected from everyday life. This was so even if particular literacy practices they learned in the classes bore little or no resemblance to everyday life uses of literacy.

To summarise, Monica's, Hilda's and Anna's literacy classes show that the literacy discourses of the NLPN far from being hegemonic, were in fact open to much change and revision. Hilda's group transformed the discourses of the NLPN as they located the class within their religious identities. Learners altered the content of their lessons by adding religious literacy practices. In a similar way, in Anna's class, religious literacy practices had been incorporated into the lesson.

In Monica's class, however, typical school practices played a prominent role in the lessons and the classroom procedures indicated a strong orientation of learners towards a 'school' for adults. This suited the group's own understanding of teaching and learning, namely the idea that knowledge was located in the teacher and the textbook rather than in learners' everyday life experience. Yet in one sense, this contradicted the NLPN's policy which, however, had it own contradictions. While the overall orientation of the NLPN, as I explained earlier in this chapter, is much influenced by its policy of equivalency with formal education, the programme also tries to introduce participatory and adult-centred methods. These are for example highlighted in promoters' handbooks and in the training they receive. In its teacher training, the NLPN adopts an adult-centred perspective, as I could observe myself when I visited a training course for new promoters in June 1999. Monica is a good example of a teacher whose directive and textbook-centred style opposes the programme's participatory ethos. However, as I demonstrated earlier in this section, Monica's teaching methods were not imposed on her class. Rather, they were the result of the group's common vision of education and their desire to be learners in a school for adults.

Similar differences between programme planners' and participants' views of education have been found in other studies. Betts reports that in her study

in El Salvador, the literacy method proposed by the programme (in her case REFLECT) was rejected by the learners. In a literacy programme for older people in Durban, South Africa, the organisers struggled with similar opposition by participants to their planned learner-centred teaching methods (see Help Age International 1998). Mpoyiya and Prinsloo (1996) also report a positive orientation towards the school model and a rejection of learner-centred methods among adults in a township in Cape Town.

None of these researchers provides a conclusive explanation for many learners' positive orientation towards schooled literacy practices. Mpoyiya and Prinsloo regard people's internalised deficit views as one explanatory factor. Kell, who observed adult evening classes in an informal settlement in the Cape, is rather critical of the formalised, school-oriented approach. She argues that essay-text literacies do not articulate with learners' everyday life uses of literacy (Kell 1995). But she also notes that many participants desire formal education for its symbolic value and its assumed link to employment and economic opportunities. In my view, this latter point is particularly important in the Namibian context. We can see here that when learners talk about literacy, in fact, they mean by it not only basic reading and writing skills, but something much broader, what in their view constitutes 'education', a concept that is closely associated with status and material well-being. I will come back to learners' own understanding of literacy in the following and final chapter of my thesis.

Kell's view is indicative of a dilemma researchers and programme planners may face in their attempts to design a literacy programme based on everyday life literacy practices (cf. Rogers et al. 1999; CLPN 2000; Rogers 2001). In light of my discussion of Monica's, Anna's and Hilda's groups, I suggest that we have to look both at specific uses of literacy as well as people's broader cultural meanings and valuations of education. My examples reveal how particular uses of literacy, for example those related to religious practices, on the initiative of learners can be integrated in the lessons. Yet learners' cultural understandings of school and their valuation of formal

education nevertheless meant that they wanted a 'school' for adults, not a course on how to read the Bible in English. Because of their positive orientation towards formal education, it is reasonable to assume that the above groups would reject a more informal approach or one that is based on specific everyday life uses of literacy. I will come back to the implications of these insights for literacy programmes in the conclusions to this thesis.

11. CLASSROOMS, CRAFT SHOPS AND CREDIT LETTERS: LITERACY PRACTICES 'INSIDE' AND 'OUTSIDE'

1. Introduction

The purpose of this last chapter is to discuss the relationship between reading and writing in the NLPN and literacy practices of everyday life and work.

But how am I going to approach this task? To make it easier, I will begin by saying what I am not doing. Crucially, this section will not be a juxtaposition of the obviously different ways in which vocabularies were taught in the NLPN classrooms and the way my informants were confronted with new words when they read an invoice or filled in a deposit slip. One could compare literacy events inside and outside in this way. But such an approach is too narrow and cannot be satisfying, because it would necessarily remain at a descriptive level. More importantly, a direct comparison runs the risk of leading to blunt judgmental statements and gross abstractions that take no account of the specific context within which each way of using reading and writing is embedded. In other words, it would mean treating literacy as autonomous and separating its instrumental uses from its cultural and ideological meanings.

This, however, is not the approach I adopted in this research. Literacy and language, I have argued, 'must always be understood in their social, cultural and political contexts' (Lanksheer 1997: 130). What this means for any attempt to compare different literacy practices is that it can only be 'in context' and needs to take account of the site-specific constructions of literacy. Furthermore, what we need to look at is not only the social uses of literacy in each context, as an autonomous view would suggest, but the social

valuations of literacy, as they differ from context to context. It is at this level, i.e. at the level of practices and discourses that my comparison is located.

What I will do then is discuss literacy practices, both 'inside' – how they are part of classroom discourses and classroom practices – and 'outside' – as part of daily life – as they are embedded in social relationships and integrated with networks of power and ideology. In particular, I attempt in this last chapter to summarise the way my informants, i.e. a small group of literacy learners and tourism workers in Namibia, understood and valued literacy. My argument is that if we attend to these individual and communal perceptions of literacy, we can better understand what gives some literacies more social power than others. We can then find out why people seek access to some practices but not others. At the same time, this perspective highlights the crucial links between literacy and identity.

The questions I raise are the following: What was the role of reading and writing in my informants' lives? When, how and to what ends did they make use of literacy? How did they confront the dominant literacies of the state, of school and the economy? And, finally, what was the relationship between these dominant literacy practices and their own uses of reading and writing?

2. The role literacy played in my informants' lives

Undoubtedly, literacy played an important role in my informants' lives. In their daily lives, tour guides, cleaners, domestic workers and craft vendors made use of a range of complex literacy practices. Many of these are associated with new institutions, new social practices and new types of social and economic relationships that have become important in Namibia since it gained independence in 1990.

What unites Martha, the crafts vendor, Israel, the local tour guide, Emma, the cleaner, and Carolina, the elderly lady who learned to read and write, is their struggle to make a living and create a life for themselves under the changed social and economic conditions of post-apartheid Namibia. Emma, a

single mother with two children, came to Windhoek searching for work. When Israel, the tour guide in Katutura, left school, he could not find a job. In a society that still has to achieve greater equality for its population, Emma's, Israel's, Carolina's and Martha's stories reflect the difficult living circumstances that many black and coloured Namibians face. They live in an environment that is shaped by a severe lack of formal employment, salaries that are often appallingly low and an already overcrowded informal sector that leaves them with little choice but to grasp every small opportunity there is.

Crucially, the living conditions that await people in town, their greater contact with institutional structures and the need to find new resources, engage them in a broad range of new literacy and language practices. One of the biggest changes has been brought about by the declaration of English as the new official language and its use in all public and administrative texts and documents.

For many Namibians, these shifts in the social environment result in new learning demands. For the tour guides and craft vendors who were my informants these new literacies were linked to the tasks of their new jobs. Whereas Philadelphia and Israel found themselves learning about the history of the township, Martha learned how to budget and how to price her goods. In the meantime, the learners whom I met in the NLPN's classes in the MBEC and in Katutura faced the challenge of having to cope with both schooled literacy and the new bureaucratic and institutional literacy demands of their out-of-school lives. When she had to fight a support case against the father of her children, Emma for example had to deal with a court system that functions exclusively in English.

In many situations in everyday life, my informants, be they domestic workers, cleaners, drivers or tourism workers, found themselves face to face with dominant literacy practices whose authority was grounded in institutional processes and bureaucratic structures. Much of the communication in such contexts, be it in a shop, at the local post office or at the Municipality's tourism office, relies on the use of written texts. These texts are often mediated by

employees whose power is guaranteed by their institutional authority. Furthermore, these literacy practices belong to distinct genres and make use of specific words, phrases and text styles. They are embedded in social practices and framed by discourses that reflect the ideologies and priorities of the ruling political classes or the foreign traveller. Most importantly, these 'powerful literacies' (Crowther, Hamilton and Tett 2001) are all in English.

In the NLPN, learners meet with a range of equally powerful literacy practices. As described in the previous chapter, these are associated with the English language, with schooled literacy and with certificates. Tourism workers on the other hand are confronted with the authority of professional qualifications that are valued by the tourists and recognised by the private tourism industry.

How then did my informants encounter these new literacies? In the new social context of independent Namibia and life in Windhoek, for many the encounter with such high-status literacies had become a regular fact of daily life. People's perceptions of literacy and language were strongly shaped by these experiences. While bureaucratic and economic practices often provoked feelings of anger, injustice and reinforced perceptions of deprivation, at the same time they were seen as pathways towards desirable benefits. They were believed to provide access to resources and beneficial relationships. This was most obviously the case in learners' perceptions of schooled literacy.

As in Emma's example, the experience of having to deal with officials and state institutions strongly impacted on how my informants assessed the need for literacy in their lives. Time and again, in interviews learners of the NLPN and tourism workers mentioned the many contexts of everyday life where they had to use the English language, both orally and in written form. Not surprisingly, English was the language both tourism workers and learners in the NLPN felt they most urgently needed. Learners had to communicate with officials and doctors, whether like Irmela they wished to become a clerk or like

Carolina they had to go to hospital to have their blood pressure checked. Tourism workers could not do their job without knowing at least some English.

Yet for neither group was English valued only in relation to such everyday life demands and wishes. In a broader sense, they associated English with status, with success and with the attributes of modern life in post-apartheid Namibia. In many contexts of everyday life and work, English presented itself as a particularly powerful literacy. Documents, such as the application form for a housing loan, represented the anonymous power of the state which decided over the allocation of resources to people like Sofia who were in desperate need of such loans.

At their workplace, Sofia, Carolina and the other cleaners experienced the power of English literacy, as it was embodied in the presence of the employees and the Ministers whose offices they cleaned, and in the drafted reports they found in the waste bins which they cleared out daily. Tourism workers like Israel and Martha encountered English as the dominant language of tourism, spoken by the wealthy European tourists, whom they tried to attract to their services.

Because for Carolina, Justus, Sofia, Israel and Martha English was connected to power, they conceptualised English literacy as empowering. In a study of women's literacy uses in Pakistan, Zubair (2001) observed similar attitudes towards literacy. Younger women in the communities she studied aspired to literacy, because it carried with it the promise of greater economic and social independence. Accordingly, when these Pakistani women spoke about literacy, they meant something much broader than basic reading and writing in English or Urdu (ibid.).

In a similar way, for my informants literacy had a broad meaning and a strong symbolic signification. What it really meant for John, Justus, Irmela or Emma was education and the material well-being and way of life of the new black urban middle class. In contemporary Namibia, education and professional qualifications have become important social signifiers, markers of status, success and authority. At the same time, and despite the enormous

efforts of the new government to mitigate these differences, education disparities between black and white Namibians remain substantial.

The above examples indicate that the ability to speak and write in English for many Namibians is synonymous with being educated, being rich and having power[1]. Aikman (2001) found similar attitudes regarding the role of Spanish among the Harakmut, an ethnic minority in Peru. Kell, who interviewed literacy learners in an informal settlement in the Cape, also found that these learners valued English, because it is 'the language of the powerful' (Kell 1995: 20). At the same time, for her informants learning English stood for their general 'yearning' for education (ibid.: 22).

Education, then, had a central place in my informants' lifeworld discourses. Both the tourism workers and the learners of the NLPN with whom I worked associated their lack of literacy and education with the inequalities and the structural differences they experienced at work and in their personal lives. Local tourism workers faced the competition of the private white tour operators, whilst cleaners and domestic workers assessed their own position vis-à-vis their white employers, the nurses in the hospital or the black employees of the Ministry. In that sense, both learners of the NLPN and tourism workers understood literacy in relation to their own position in the new Namibia with its old and new inequalities and its specific class configuration.

Furthermore, for both groups, lack of literacy was associated with a general feeling of deprivation, with dependence, with hardship and lack of opportunity. But at the same time, for both groups, the prospect of a different life, similar to that of the old white and the new black elites, was linked to their perceived value of education and certificates.

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[1] A survey on language attitudes carried out in 1993 revealed a high support of English as the official language among speakers of different Namibian languages. However, in his summary of the survey's results, Puetz does not directly discuss perceptions of status and power as shaping people's attitudes towards English (Puetz 1995b).

The above views can be compared with Dyer and Choksi's (2001) findings regarding the role of literacy for the Rabaris, a nomadic group in Gujarat in West India. Similar to how my informants spoke about literacy, for the Rabaris, the word literacy was almost synonymous with education. Literacy, Dyer and Choksi argue

> emerged as a whole ideology, shaped by the social, economic and political circumstances of their lives and their sense of self in relation to other groups (Dyer and Choksi 2001: 37).

As a consequence, the kind of literacy programme the Rabaris were interested in would have to provide access to new and viable livelihoods and to the 'social manners' and the language that would allow the Rabaris entry into a sedentary life in the modern Indian society (ibid.). Much the same could be said about how the Namibians in my study conceptualised literacy and literacy teaching. It was associated with economic capital (jobs and money), with cultural capital (language) and with symbolic capital, that is, with the habitus of the new urban middle classes.

3. Internalisation or strategic alignment?

What strikes me about the above position is that both groups' perceptions of education show strong similarities with the government's deficit view. Both the tourism workers and the learners whom I met in Namibia shared a belief in formal qualifications that mirrored the policy environment for education in Namibia. As explained in the previous chapter, current education policies in Namibia are largely defined by labour-market concerns and the belief in human resource development as a prerequisite for economic success. There was in the classrooms, but also among people 'outside', a high level of collusion with these dominant narratives which appear to have colonised public opinion. The importance of certificates for Albertine, Christina and the others most clearly illustrates this point.

But is this apparent acceptance of dominant views the result of a process of internalisation, as some researchers suggest (Mpoyiya and Prinsloo 1996;

Rogers 2001)? My own view is that the processes involved are much more complex. First of all, in the case of the cleaners and domestic workers whom I met in Monica's, Hilda's and Anna's class, their feelings towards the promise of education were not without ambiguity. Their perceptions were similar to how Horsman describes the attitudes of working class women in Nova Scotia. Horsman (1994) argues that these women who tried to escape their monotonous life at home and their badly paid manual jobs, dreamt the dream of literacy as a pathway to a different life. But, in much the same way as Sofia and Irmela did, they also questioned the likelihood of this dream's fulfilment. Although they were aware of the limited job opportunities available even for educated women, they felt they still had to try. This is precisely what Irmela told me[2]. In some ways, then, Irmela and the others took a more realistic view of education than those in the head office of the NLPN. But notwithstanding their doubts regarding the likelihood of their dream coming true, in attending the literacy classes, Sofia and Irmela achieved one of their aims – enhanced self-respect. This explains why they and others identified so strongly with the classes and with the NLPN.

In a similar way, some of the tourism workers in my study welcomed certificates, as these could mean an important change in their status and their identity. The following examples illustrate some tourism workers' reactions to the discourse of professionalisation. After Raphael, a guide in Epupa, had participated in a tour guiding course that was jointly organised by NACOBTA and NATH, the owner of a private campsite in Epupa allowed him to approach tourists from within the campsite. In fact, that he took the training was one of the requirements the camp owner had set for Raphael to work on the campsite[3]. Before the course, Raphael had already worked as a guide, but he had not regarded his work as a proper job. Only after the course, at the end of

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[2] Interview with Irmela, Windhoek, 21.7.2000.

[3] This did not mean that Raphael was employed by the campsite. He made his income from the money tourists paid him for his tours.

which he had received a badge, did he begin to see his job as a real profession[4]. The training, the badge and his changed working conditions had altered his perception of himself as a guide.

In contrast to this, Ben's example (see Chapter 9) highlights a strategic move on his side. Based on his knowledge of tourists' expectations and the industry's conventions, he seemed to have accepted the need to acquire a professional status and a badge. However, when I discussed training needs with him, his opinion was quite different. He certainly acknowledged the need to further his experience in specific areas, but he did not in general regard himself as an unqualified guide.

While Raphael had been lucky to participate in a course which allowed him to call himself a trained local tour guide, Ben did not have this opportunity. After he was trained by NACOBTA, he did not receive a badge. But Ben found his own strategy to satisfy the market's demand for qualifications and their visual representations. He simply appropriated the discourse of professionalisation by making his own badge.

Like Ben, many of the tourism workers in my study thought about their own abilities and their educational needs much more directly in relation to the tasks of their job. Martha for example found that the training courses in pricing and budgeting she had participated in had been very helpful[5]. But she never expressed a general yearning for education. Contrary to many of the people I met in the classes of the NLPN, she did not seem to mind her low level of formal education.

Furthermore, tourism workers' identities were less affected by the existence of the new black middle classes, because within the tourism sector, it is still mainly white Namibians who held most of the more prestigious

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[4] Interview with Raphael, Epupa, Kaokoveld, 13.8.2000, interview conducted in English.

[5] Interview with Martha, Windhoek, 5.8.2000, interview conducted in English.

positions. Accordingly, local tourism workers saw themselves primarily in relation to the white lodge owners and tour operators and their employees.

What I take from the above is that in one way, the literacy learners and tourism workers in my study, the latter albeit to a lesser degree, identified with the government's deficit discourse and felt their own knowledge and experience to be lagging behind. But people's identities are never totally coherent or without ambiguity. Rather, as Holland, D. et al. put it, persons are 'composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings and identities' (Holland, D. et al. 1998: 9). In one sense, people like Christina and Sofia may have felt their own literacy to be inadequate and in deficit. However, as Kell (2001) argues, relating to unschooled South Africans, while with one part of their identity Christina and Sofia may have constructed themselves as deficit, another part of their selves did not regard their own skills and experience as inadequate at all.

During the first months of my fieldwork, I was often struck by the contradictory way in which learners and tourism workers spoke about their abilities. On the one hand, they often presented themselves as 'needy' students who were extremely aware of their own lack of knowledge. They bemoaned their lack of education which they associated with their general weakness and inability. But on many other occasions, in informal conversations and in more structured interviews, they asserted a rather different identity. They spoke about their abilities and their skills and explained how they would use these in order to achieve whatever goal they had set themselves.

Christina, a learner in Monica's class, is a good example to illustrate this ambiguity. Of all the learners I met she was the most keen on improving her formal education. She repeatedly asked me about the NLPN's Adult Upper Primary Education course (AUPE) which she hoped to join. Christina was interested in the AUPE course, because it offers the opportunity to achieve a level of education equivalent to a primary school leaving certificate. She told me about her plans, once she graduated from AUPE, to continue her formal

education through the Namibian College for Open Learning's formal evening classes. Yet she also explained to me that she did not really see herself as lacking competence or as knowing less than other people. She was for example confident that she had the skills to set up a successful business. But she was aware that she lacked the opportunities available to others. She knew that it would be difficult if not impossible for her to get a loan from a bank. A school leaving certificate, she hoped, would open up new possibilities and help her to achieve her goals.

I interpret Christina's plans not merely as the result of internalising the discourse of schooling. A part of her may have accepted her deficit. But at the same time, she was very assertive and conscious of her own abilities. In part then, her interest in formal education may have been the result of a conscious decision on her part in the light of material and institutional constraints. She purposefully aligned herself with values and standards which, in her own assessment of the current policy environment, to a large extent determined what opportunities were available to her.

4. The importance of education for people's identities

We may still want to ask why for people like Christina education was so important. One answer, as I explained earlier, lies in the way Christina and others saw their own position in the new Namibia. For Christina, Sofia, Irmela and many others, education and, in a similar sense, English had symbolic value that can only be understood if we take into account the historical context in which they were brought up. Apartheid severely restricted access to education for black and coloured Namibians. Historically then, black and coloured Namibian's level of formal education was much lower than that of the white population; these differences persist today.

Eleven years after independence, although new opportunities have been created, Justus felt that not much had changed in his life, at least not in economic terms. He once explained to me that, in his view, although

independence had brought important changes and had abolished white rule, the majority of the black Namibians still was as poor as they had been before 1990[6]. But as Hertha, a cleaner and a learner in Anna's class once told me, so many other people had '*improved*'[7]. What she meant here is that in material terms for many others life had changed for the better.

What I see in the above quotes is a continuity in my informants' identities in relation to education. Lack of formal education was still regarded as a severe disadvantage. Accordingly, many learners felt that it was particularly important for themselves and for their children to become educated. Tegborg, who studied the NLPN in the Caprivi, the far North-West of Namibia, found that for many learners she interviewed lack of education was a stigma (Tegborg 1996). She argues that the experience of apartheid may have caused the particular value of education that persists today and is perhaps higher than in other countries (ibid.: 93). I would add to this the experiences of many Namibians with the new system that developed after independence and in which the old race-based inequalities have in part been replaced by new class divisions.

To summarise, the above discussion reveals that the tourism workers and the learners in my study experienced literacy in relation to their own position in a changing society. Furthermore, their views on education revolved around their daily struggles for sufficient income and their hopes for a future that would be more secure and more fulfilling. For both groups, literacy (and education) had meaning within these struggles and aspirations. If both learners and tourism workers sought education, it was as part of these projects. Furthermore, it was revealed that both groups not only shared similar desires, they also both at work and in their daily lives faced similar literacy

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6 Justus, 13.8.2000.

7 Interview with Hertha, Katutura State Hospital, Windhoek 27.7.2000, interview translated from Oshikwanyama.

practices. To reiterate, these were the dominant literacies of the state and the economy.

Finally, both groups brought to their encounters with such dominant literacy practices similar experiences. Both had experienced exclusion and faced the struggle to compete with others who have been much more successful in harvesting the fruits of independence. Because the members of this latter group tend to possess certificates and formal qualifications, for my informants, the value of formal education remained high, even if some of them had begun to realise that in the current economic context certificates no longer automatically opened the doors to salaried employment. These experiences help to explain why my informants so often bemoaned their 'lack of education'.

The apparent acceptance of dominant discourses then needs to be seen in the broader social context of Namibia in the years since the end of South African occupation. If we take into account my informants' experiences with apartheid and with the new system, we begin to understand why the discourse of education and literacy as the key to success had such a strong place in their sense of self. It was part of their identity, whether like Irmela they were still young and hoped to go back to formal education or to find a good job, or, like Carolina, they simply hoped in their old age to make up for what they have missed out on as children.

Their general yearning for education, however, did not exclude that many of my informants also related literacy to context-specific uses and activities that required reading and writing. Justus for example wanted to read the Bible in English. Carolina wanted to speak to a doctor without having to rely on a nurse for translations.

But, as I argued in Chapter 4, these instrumental uses of literacy were only one part of what brought people to the NLPN. At the same time, as I explained earlier, literacy remained connected to people's dreams of self-respect, a return to formal education, a better job or the material comforts of the middle classes. Another example from a recent study in South Africa

amplifies this point. In two rural settlements in the Eastern Cape, researchers found strong orientations among women towards schooled literacy (McEwan and Malan 1996). For the women in this study, education symbolised a better life where they would 'struggle' less and have more resources (ibid.: 7). These women, like the learners in Monica's class, tended to think of literacy in terms of schooling and formal qualifications (cf. Rockhill 1993).

It is likely that for many people in my study, their wishes and expectations were located somewhere between these two poles (cf. Rogers et al. 1999), encompassing both practical uses of literacy and the much broader dream of education. This is confirmed by Dyer and Choksi's (2001) study who found both instrumental literacy needs as well as a more general interest in education among the Rabaris.

While many tourism workers, as I argued earlier, by and large shared the dream of education, for some of them it had already lost much of its credibility. People like Israel and Philadelphia had themselves experienced that a high level of formal education does not necessarily guarantee a job. In their current situation as local tour guides, their primary interest was in training in particular areas which were directly related to the context-specific tasks of their jobs. In that sense, education for them had a more functional or instrumental value and was less linked to a grand narrative of progress and change than it was for many of the learners whom I met in the NLPN.

5. Conclusions:

People's own agendas and their reactions to dominant discourses

I find myself coming back to the issue of internalisation and the colonisation of lifeworld discourses by dominant discourses. Several further considerations may help to shed light on this question. What I am trying to tease out here is a central issue I struggled with in my analysis of literacy practices in Namibia and which I repeatedly discussed in this thesis. Were my informants' views and actions the result of mere domination or subordination, or should we not

see in their projects the signs of agency and appropriation? Were learners' reactions to the classes, described in the previous chapter, not witness to their agency? To what extent did these learners challenge dominant discourses and their associated literacies? And, did subordination exist side by side with agency and transformation?

By and large, learners' and tourism workers' aspirations were located within the cultural values and the development models of the existing system. The kind of prospects the people in my study sought were determined by the opportunities available in the social and cultural context of present day Namibia. Education in particular in their views was directly linked to integration or inclusion, not opposition, and the desire to benefit from the resources and opportunities the current system was believed to offer (cf. Betts 2001). They constructed their own meanings of literacy and life largely within the boundaries of the discourses 'that surrounded them' (Sola and Bennet 1994: 134), thereby reacting to a discursive environment that offered solutions which lay within the parameters of the current set-up.

Yet this does not mean that my informants were not active agents of their own destiny. Furthermore, their strategies did not exclude success in submitting external discourses to their own personal intentions. Although their lives were cast by powerful discourses and material conditions that closely circumscribed their lives, they did, as Holland, D. et al. (1998: xiii) argue, nevertheless 'remake' these circumstances. What the people in my study managed to do was to recast dominant discourses and in this process to make them part of their own projects. By doing so, hegemonic discourses, while being accepted, were also challenged and transformed. Such forms of re-appropriation were part of what happened in the classes of the NLPN, how ordinary people dealt with loans and credits and characterised how local tourism workers confronted the dominant discourses of the tourism industry and its foreign visitors.

Nevertheless, the powerful effects of hegemonic discourses in shaping local voices and local projects cannot easily be denied. This thesis contains

numerous examples of the constraining power of dominant discourses and their associated literacies on people's opportunities, their projects and their identities. Far from shying away from the literacy practices they find at their doorsteps, many people in Namibia actively seek to acquire high-status literacies. In fact, many are 'fast' learners in the business of dealing with the new literacies of the state and the economy. In the process, unwittingly, they adapt to and adopt dominant discourses and practices.

In Chapter 6, I explained that how my informants reacted to dominant discourses was a result of how they experienced specific instances of power and inequality. What for example were Sofia's experiences with the loan she received from the Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing? How did John feel about the credit agreement he signed in order to buy his TV set? And what did Israel and Philadelphia think about their relationship with the Windhoek Municipality? In earlier chapters, I tried to give some tentative answers to these questions. But these subjective aspects of power are particularly difficult to research and the risk of the researcher's interpretations remaining bound to her own worldview is particularly great.

Part of my answer was that processes of identification necessarily go along with apprenticeship in new literacy practices. To what extent this identification is the result of internalisation remains a question for further research. Such research needs to considerably narrow down the range of literacy practices included in my study and take a much closer look at how people experience literacy in specific situations.

There cannot be, I believe, any straightforward and general answers to the question of power, agency, identity and internalisation. Let me, nevertheless, add a final point to the above discussion. It seems to me that what is called internalisation misses two important points. First, as I argued earlier, people's identities are always multiple and contain different and often contradictory elements. Second, people like Christina, Albertine and Israel were not ignorant of the power relations that structured their environment and resulted in their own often subordinate positions. But as they strove to improve their

own situation, struggled to access resources and to deploy favourable relationships, they aligned themselves with dominant discourses and practices. They adopted the discourses of the powerful, as these seemed to provide a gateway towards the kind of projects they envisaged for themselves. Becoming a participant in the NLPN was one such move. Seeking to become a certified tour guide was a similar step.

However, in doing so learners or tourism workers did not simply accept the discourses they appeared to have adopted. This is revealed by a further story from Monica's class. At one occasion, I asked the group what they thought about the Primary Health Care book. In my own view, this textbook is overtly patronising and undervalues the knowledge learners bring with them to the programme. But the group's answers revealed to me that they actually paid little attention to the content and the ideologies of the book. Yes, they agreed with me, the book did not contain any new information for them. But, they 'had not known these things in English'[8], and that made the book worthwhile to them. What we see here is how these learners appropriated the discourses of the programme, by 'filtering out' what was useful to them. They took the lessons as an opportunity to learn what they had come for: new English words and phrases. In a study of a women's literacy programme in Nepal, Robinson-Pant (1997) found that learners used the same strategies. Rogers makes a similar point about how in the context of development programmes local groups may 'pick up' (Rogers 2001: 215) those elements of the dominant agenda that suit them and use them in their own ways.

To repeat, what happened here and what I have seen happening in other situations, was neither mere subordination nor total rejection. As Betts (2001) argues, people face the constraining effects of dominant discourses and to a certain extent they undoubtedly accept these and make them their own. In that sense, power is constitutive of identity in the way Foucault (1988b) has

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[8] Fieldnotes, Monica's class, MBEC, 6.7.1999.

suggested. But at the same time, people make 'a contribution towards defining them' (Betts 2001: 168).

The above example of Monica's class demonstrates how the group contributed to redefining the discourses of the NLPN. They appropriated the ideologies of the programme by reinterpreting the purpose of the lesson from an instruction in basic hygiene (what most of the book was about) into an opportunity to improve their English vocabulary. In this situation, the group managed to recast the discourses of the programme according to their own intentions.

As a conclusion, we can then say that the black Namibians I worked with in this research were certainly not without agency. They may not always have been aware of each detail of the new forms of governance they were subjected to, but they were conscious of the basic power relationships in the new system. Furthermore, they actively defined for themselves what they wished to achieve and how they desired to live. Literacy and education were important tools in my informants' struggle to achieve these aims. In daily life, they used their own literacy and discourse strategies in order to access dominant structures and the benefits these provided. If, by doing so, they adjusted to hegemonic values and practices, they nevertheless did not totally submit to these agendas. Rather, they reclaimed these same discourses in an attempt to establish their own individual projects and to reconstruct their position in society.

What is perhaps most interesting for literacy studies in this context is the role of new literacy practices and their associated discourses in both these processes, top-down and bottom-up. While many of these new literacies appeared to be associated with constraining and dominating powers, at the same time, there was the potential for my informants to take up these literacy practices and to turn them into a powerful resource in their own struggles.

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I have looked at literacy practices of everyday life and work in Namibia. I have described a range of institutionalised, bureaucratic and commercial uses of reading and writing that many Namibians deal with in everyday life. These range from paying one's electricity bill to buying a TV set on credit or putting up a signpost to advertise a local crafts outlet. My aim was twofold. First, to expand the New Literacy Studies (NLS) into new territory, exploring new domains of social activity that have come to play a crucial part in people's lives, not only in Namibia. And, second, to extend the conceptual basis of the NLS in order to include the positioning of literacy practices within social discourses and their link with people's identities.

In this thesis, I have argued that in the everyday social life of my informants, literacy practices were implicated in struggles over economic and cultural resources and were embedded in hierarchical social and economic relationships. In so doing, I have highlighted the many ways in which for them literacy practices were part and parcel of broader processes of individual and societal change in post-apartheid Namibia. I have extended this theoretical perspective to illustrate aspects of reading and writing in the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN).

The picture that emerges is diverse and complex and mirrors the many distinct ways in which the people in my study dealt with and took up the new forms of literacy that had become part of their lives. In the following, I review these findings and discuss their implications for the theory and practice of literacy.

I have divided the following into four sections. The first section summarises the main results of my study, highlights its theoretical conclusions

and suggests directions for further research. In the second section, I briefly examine the methodological questions that emerge from my research and which could be of relevance to future work in the NLS. The third section discusses implications for policy and practice, referring to the National Literacy Programme in Namibia. The fourth and final section focuses on the policy and practice implications that derive from my case study on tourism and literacy.

1. Local and dominant literacy practices in Katutura and elsewhere in Namibia: theoretical implications

Following my informants in their daily activities, in their dealings with the Municipality, as local tour guides, or as shoppers in one of Windhoek's many stores, I was struck by the wide range of literacy practices these activities demanded and the extent to which literacy had become a regular part of these people's lives. In Katutura, in Uis, at the Brandberg, as much as in the rural areas of Kaokoveld and Kavango, I met people who increasingly lived in an environment that actively involved them with literacy on a day-to-day basis. As these people moved between places, took on new roles and new occupations, they became incorporated into new social and institutional relationships many of which required them to use distinct forms of reading and writing.

In these times of new literacy demands, my informants' own reading and writing practices had changed and kept on changing. As they sought to expand their own literacy repertoire, many of them relied on informal learning strategies. Yet others sought the support of an organised learning programme, such as the NLPN.

In order to deal with institutional and commercial literacy practices, my informants regularly engaged the support of literacy mediators. Their task went far beyond translating between languages and modes, but included the essential role of mediating between different discourses and worldviews. However, there were different types of mediators. Some were 'high-level'

mediators, whose position was backed up by their institutional affiliation, while others were closer to the people on whose behalf they mediated. In many situations, the reliance on a mediator happened out of necessity rather than choice.

Dominant literacies and discourses, be they of the state, of school or of the economy, had a significant impact on my informants' identities and worldviews. In many contexts, literacy served as an instrument to promote new values and role models. Examples I have given are the discourses of tourism that confined local people to 'traditional' roles, or the discourses of the government that highlighted people's responsibilities as citizens in a modern state. These discursive constructions of identity took place in a context of limited resources and opportunities. As a consequence, many Namibians sought to align themselves with the new discourses and the new social practices that appeared to make some people more successful than others in a society that is still shaped by severe inequalities. As part of this move, they sought to acquire these dominant literacy practices which presented themselves as the gateway for access to resources and status. This, in part, explains the strong school orientation among the people in my study.

But whilst these moves were guided by coalescence with dominant discourses and practices, they also carried in them the potential for change and re-appropriation leading in some cases to a re-negotiation and re-definition of hegemonic discourses and identities. What has come out clearly in this research is the role of literacy in both these processes, not only as a constraining force, but also as a resource for change and, possibly, resistance.

As far as the theory of literacy as a social and discursive practice is concerned, this thesis has shown that research into literacy has much to gain from an approach that explicitly focuses on discourse and power. Discourses, in this view, do not operate in a social vacuum, but are part and parcel of social and economic relationships. The notion of discourse is particularly important if we want to understand the role of literacy in sustaining, reinforcing

or challenging the specific power constellations that exist within each sphere of social activity.

My fieldwork in Namibia has identified a range of social discourses in which different literacy practices are embedded. These are, among others, the discourses of economic development and personal upliftment, the discourses of citizenship, nation-building and reconciliation and the discourses of consumerism and modern lifestyle.

My examples of tourism literacies have highlighted the particular ways in which literacy practices are associated with such discourses. In Namibian tourism, eco- and ethno-discourses are currently particularly fashionable, as they mirror the foreign tourist's fascination with exotic cultures and the supposed 'purity' of the Namibian landscapes. The writers of a signboard or a promotional brochure need to know and be able to reproduce these discourses that shape tourists' perceptions of the services on offer. But in the dense tourism market, where local tourism workers compete with private tour operators, it is not easy for them to translate these discursive strategies into viable economic capital.

A further example of the association of literacy with specific discourses is the current mainstream policy framework for adult education in Namibia. Through its underlying discourse of human resource development, it constructs many Namibians as 'illiterate' and lacking basic education and work-related skills. Accordingly, policies such as the NLPN invite people to address their deficits by taking up the opportunities the government provides. This example illustrates how literacy is used as an instrument to promote specific ideologies, but at the same time serves as an ideology in itself.

Much of the discussion in this thesis had to do with how the people in my study reacted to and engaged with dominant literacy practices. As a learning process, both informally in daily life and in a more structured way in the literacy classes, this extended far beyond the acquisition of words, of grammatical structures, factual knowledge or required forms of behaviour. In this thesis, I have argued that when people learn new literacies, they are likely

to align themselves with the discourses these literacies are embedded in. This, in turn, affects their identities. Learning English for example, for many participants of the NLPN, was associated with a dream for a better position in society and a feeling of being more educated and having more power.

In order to understand these processes of identification, I combined a critical analysis of dominant literacy practices with research into my informants' personal experiences of power. In the space available in this thesis, I have not been able to provide a comprehensive account of these processes for many of the new literacy practices I described. My suggestion for further research therefore is to look more closely at how 'people's identities have been constructed and reinforced by coercive discourses' (Deveux 1996: 229). Such research would have to limit itself to one or two of the areas I have discussed here. The purpose of such study would be to expand the critical analysis of dominant literacy practices and to deepen our understanding of the links between literacy, discourse and identity that I have tentatively began to develop here.

Yet at the same time I believe as researchers of literacy we need to continue to look at the opposite tendency, that is, at how discourse itself can be a resource to resist and reconstruct coercive discourses. The main task for literacy studies is to ask what the role of reading and writing is in this process, i.e. how it can be used as a resource in the constitution and re-negotiation of people's lifeworlds.

What I have shown, despite the limited nature of my work, is that the people in my study were not passive victims or recipients of new discourses and new literacy practices. On the contrary, John, Israel, Sofia, Christina and the many others whose stories I have revealed, are active subjects capable of different responses to social power. They positioned themselves vis-à-vis dominant discourses in various ways. Each of them responded to the opportunities and constraints they experienced in a distinct manner. Literacy for them had meaning within their individual projects for sustaining, improving or recuperating the quality of their lives. Literacy, seen from this perspective,

poses important questions for our understanding of broader processes of cultural and social change. In the Namibian context, these concern the subject creating powers of the new state, the formation of new social classes and the rise of new forms of economic power which are increasingly globalised in nature.

2. Implications for methodology

In carrying out this study, I have seen the value of researching a broad range of literacy practices within various domains. However, this same approach has limited my ability to thoroughly research literacy practices in one specific field. In many of the areas I studied, I was not able to provide as detailed a picture of the social uses of literacy as I would have liked. At times, I lacked the detailed knowledge of the local context that would have been necessary. Where the personal and individual understandings of literacy and power are concerned, my analysis often remains on the surface of what a social concept of literacy aims to discover. I am particularly aware that I may have missed out on people's own strategies and abilities and may unwillingly have privileged institutional practices and discourses. These qualifications derive from the limits of ethnography as a method as much as from the particular conditions of my research.

Despite these limitations, I would argue that ethnography has been essential for my ability to identify and understand everyday life uses of literacy and people's own theories of education. My willingness to follow my informants wherever their concerns about literacy took us was particularly important. Without this open-mindedness, I would not have discovered many of the literacy practices that I have described in this thesis, as I was not aware of them when I arrived in Namibia.

Working with discourse analysis as a complementary research instrument allowed me to see texts as a central part of literacy practices. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis improved my understanding of dominant

institutional literacy practices. Yet I am also aware of the dangers discourse analysis posed for my work. At times, it presented itself as a strategy that helped to construct an analysis when my ethnographic knowledge was limited. A danger lay in forgetting that meaning does not reside in the text itself, but in what people do with texts, in why they are produced and in how they are used: in practices.

3. Links with policy and practice: the NLPN

In this study I have deliberately not started from educational or policy concerns but have focussed instead on an ethnographic approach to studying uses and meanings of literacy. Therefore, the question to ask is in what way the findings of my research can be of use for literacy education in Namibia and possibly elsewhere.

Although no specific agenda for literacy education emerges from my work, several important concepts and ideas do emerge that could contribute to the future development of the NLPN.

I want to begin with a simple question which regards the range of topics and literacy practices the NLPN currently addresses. Researching literacy in Katutura, in central Windhoek, at the tourist centres of Kaokoveld and the Brandberg, I was struck by the central role of economic and commercial literacies in people's lives. Here I am thinking of the learners in Katutura, the cleaners in the Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sports, the tour guides and the craft vendors who shopped on credit, had bills to pay and tourism brochures to write. Should and can the NLPN take up these literacy practices and include them in its curriculum? If so, how should these be addressed?

The second suggestion relates to what may appear a surprising result of my study. Sitting through many hours of teaching in the NLPN, I have seen how the particular context of each literacy group I visited, i.e. the configuration of discourses, identities, institutional setting and material realities, shaped

how participants reacted to the curriculum and how they adapted the programme to suit their own needs and expectations. Although I am aware that the limited number of classes I visited does not allow me to jump to any generalisations, the NLPN may be more flexible than it first appears to be. As a tentative result, we may conclude that learners have a bigger say in determining the NLPN than one might have expected from viewing only the textbooks and the programmatic claims.

This is an important insight emerging from the study of a centralised programme that uses the same curriculum and the same textbooks in literacy classes all over the country. It is precisely literacy programmes such as the NLPN which are often criticised for their lack of flexibility and their inability to adapt to local and individual circumstances and demands. Such criticism, as justified as it may be in some cases, appears to underestimate the role of learners and teachers in shaping the programme. Similar indications of local variations in the national literacy programme in Botswana (Youngman 1997) indicate that when home or lifeworld and school practices are incompatible, the consequence does not necessarily have to be that the 'home' has to adapt to the 'school'. It could be the other way round, as in Hilda's class where lifeworld discourses substantially altered the school discourses of the NLPN.

As far as current practice in the NLPN is concerned, a simple conclusion comes to mind: that the NLPN might want to build on this flexibility, to support the distinctiveness of each group and to encourage promoters and learners to take on the kinds of literacy practices that are important to them.

Taking a long-term perspective, the above suggestion may pave the way towards decentralisation, an issue that is already being discussed in the NLPN. If this was to be implemented, greater autonomy would have to be given to District Literacy Officers and individual promoters to develop each literacy group according to the priorities and preferences of its learners (cf. Youngman 1997; Rogers et al. 1999).

Regarding the curriculum, my suggestion reiterates a proposal made by researchers and practitioners who have sought to develop the practice

implications of the NLS. The idea is to design a literacy programme that explicitly concerns itself with the context-specific uses and meanings of literacy in everyday life and uses 'real literacy texts' as its teaching materials (Rogers 1994; British Council 1995; Rogers 1999; Rogers et al. 1999; CLPN 2000). The Bible is one such 'real' text. Credit letters, loan contracts or tourism brochures could be others.

However, I believe that programme designers and educators need to be careful with any easy and quick suggestion as to the use of such real texts and everyday life literacy practices. We have first to ask whether learners would want to deal with these documents in their literacy class. Secondly, we would have to ask how this should be done. It may be that the place for work on such everyday life literacies would be better elsewhere, for example in a community-based advice centre that would provide literacy support (see Kell 1996; Rogers 1994; Rogers et al. 1999).

A new literacy initiative in Nepal, the Community Literacy Project (CLPN 2000) started from the insight that a classroom and 'school-based' model and a single curriculum do not articulate with uses of literacy in everyday life and cannot respond to people's diverse literacy needs (CLPN 2000 and www.eddev.org/hosted/clpn). The CLPN began by carrying out studies of literacy uses in different community groups, for example savings and credit groups. The aim was to find out how people already use literacy in daily life and then to build on these literacy practices in ways that reflect learners' specific needs (CLPN 2000: 2).

The experience of the CLPN suggests that what needs to be done before any intervention can be planned is research that identifies which everyday life practices are more central to people's needs than others (cf. Street 2001c). Such research should ideally be conducted with or even by learners themselves (Prinsloo and Breier 1996; Rogers et al. 1999). There may, however, be an important difficulty with this approach. In theory, participatory research into everyday life literacies is supposed to be substantially different from the needs assessments usually carried out by literacy programmes. In

practice, I suspect, the focus of such studies may still remain on the uses of literacy which are easier to research than the more complex and abstract meanings of literacy. Yet the insights from my study suggest that it is critical for such research to go beyond looking at instrumental uses of literacy. It would have to ask for the symbolic roles literacy and education play in people's lives (cf. Aikman 2001). This is necessary in order to understand why people like Justus, Carolina and Christina wanted a school for adults, but were less interested in invoices or payment reminders as literacy practices to work with in their class.

The same would also apply to teachers. Again the issue is not solely one of skills, i.e. training teachers in the use of 'real' materials and everyday life literacy practices. More importantly, teachers' understanding of their role and their own beliefs about literacy and education would have to be considered. If, as in Monica's class, the teacher shares her learners' valuation of schooled literacy, she may – at least in the beginning – disagree with a concept of literacy that is more closely associated with local and everyday life literacy practices.

If, as I argued in this thesis, for many potential participants, learners and teachers included, the value of literacy lies in its association with school, academic knowledge and formal qualifications and the status formal education is expected to convey, these participants are likely to reject a more informal approach based on 'real' literacies (cf. Mpoyiya and Prinsloo 1996; HelpAge International 1998; Betts 2001). While the shift away from classrooms and textbooks, as chosen by the CLPN in Nepal, appears to reflect the demands of people in the communities this project works with, it would be wrong to assume that this would necessarily be the same in other locations.

What will or will not work, certainly depends on the local context of literacy, on the age, gender and personal situation of learners and on how they value different forms of reading and writing. I have shown that in some classes of the NLPN, learners made religious literacy practices a substantial part of their

lessons. It would be interesting to find out whether similar changes have been made by other literacy groups. If such adaptations are more the norm than the exception, this could be the basis for a more flexible and informal type of programme based on the insights such examples provide.

Yet a further potential difficulty in advocating a less curriculum-based approach, which might lose its basis for equivalency with formal education, is that learners may regard this as the imposition of a second class type of education. An educational intervention that is incapable of providing access to the dominant literacies of schools and formal education, could be interpreted by many Namibians as a continuing denial of 'proper' formal schooling, echoing people's experiences with the apartheid system (cf. McCabe 1998; Street 1996b).

Because formal education appears to have such a high currency at this point in Namibia's history, the question of access to dominant literacy practices is likely to be a central issue for any literacy or adult education programme. As I have shown, for many people in Namibia this is a priority. The question we need to ask is how these people want to transform their lives and how they think literacy could serve this purpose. Referring to working-class Canadian women's hopes of changing their lives through literacy, Horsman suggests that existing programmes cannot fulfil the inflated promises of literacy fuelled by the media or by the government, as in the case of the NLPN. She argues that literacy programmes can, however, help women to better understand and to critique the promise of literacy whilst at the same time providing help with participants' reading and writing.

Yet my analysis of Namibian women's (and men's) yearning for English literacy illustrates that any such attempt will face the difficulty of having to address people's ambiguous attitudes towards literacy. Similar to what Rockhill (1993) found among Hispanic women in the US, learners in the NLPN claimed that in daily life one could get along without English, while at the same time emphasising that it was very important for them to learn English.

Powerful literacies (Crowther et al. 2001), as I argued earlier in this thesis, are often experienced through ambiguous subjectivities. It is these ambiguities that literacy programmes have to address. It may then turn out that the issue of 'schooled' versus informal approaches may not be a question of either/or, but a matter of degree and dialogue. How Hilda's group changed its course of learning, is indicative of a moderated version of the curriculum-based and school-oriented approach.

4. Links with policy and practice: tourism and literacy

What are the implications of my study for the teaching of tourism literacy practices? Should tourism, as one of the external evaluators of the NLPN suggested, become a topic of the literacy programme (Bhola 1995)? In what form could this be done? In addition to the issues I discussed in the previous section, most of which would also apply to any tourism-related literacy course or programme, I want to highlight the following aspects.

My research on tourism and literacy in Namibia leads programme designers to attend to the specific power relations in tourism and to the social and institutional structures that govern the tourism sector. More concretely, I suggest that programme designers and educators need to understand what the role of literacy is within those social and institutional dynamics (cf. Breier, Taetsane and Sait 1996). If such a critical perspective is omitted, in whatever form 'tourism literacy training' will be designed, it will be confined to the instrumental aspects of tourism-related reading and writing activities.

Furthermore, we need to take on board how local tourism workers understand their own position within the sector. We may then find that local people's perception of literacy and their reasons for seeking one specific literacy but not another can be quite different from what researchers and planners themselves expected (cf. Dyer and Choksi 2001).

Several implications for the teaching of tourism literacies derive from the above. First, any form of tourism literacy training would not concentrate on

literacy as an isolated skill, but address the specific literacy-related activities of tourism workers. Literacy skills would need to be taught only insofar as they are part of the tasks and situations tourism workers deal with. The use of 'real' texts, such as cash books, invoices, application forms for PTOs, travel guides and others could form the core of such a course. Particular attention would have to be placed on the discourses and genres of tourism.

However, the reservations about a literacy programme based on 'real' literacy practices that I discussed earlier, would also apply to any course on tourism literacies. Therefore, it would again be imperative to find out how tourism workers value different literacy practices and what their most pressing needs are. Yet such a consultation may produce unexpected results. It may reveal that for some tourism workers the value of any training would depend on its status relative to the training and qualifications tourism workers in the private sector have obtained. Or, it may turn out that tourism workers do not regard literacy as their most urgent need, but that training in other areas is their priority. In such a case, a much broader tourism development programme, which could include a literacy component, would be more appropriate. Alternatively, a 'literacy-comes-second' approach that introduces literacy at a later stage of a development programme, might be chosen (cf. Rogers 1994; Rogers et al. 1999; and Nirantrar 1997 for an example from India).

Second, in line with this thesis' focus on literacy and power, I suggest that any tourism literacy course or programme might want to adopt a critical literacies approach, exploring the potential of literacy as a tool for analysing tourism workers' current position within the sector (cf. Lanksheer and McLaren 1993). Such an approach would include elements of critical language awareness (Fairclough 1992b) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995). As part of this, tourism workers' could engage in researching their own literacy practices and discourses as well as those of the sector they are part of. The purpose would be to develop, together with learners, a critical understanding of the kind of literacies and discourses they

deal with in tourism. For local tour guides like Israel or Ben, this would include the crucial question of whether they would be in a better position if they had the same formal qualifications that many of the national guides have.

Third, any tourism literacy course would have to take on board a macro-perspective and link local tourism literacies to the conditions of the global tourism industry. This is important because the adequacy of local tourism literacies for sustaining economic viability in community-based tourism enterprises depends inter alia on the development of national and global tourism policies and conditions.

Yet the critical perspective, which I suggest above, should not exclude the possibility that any tourism literacy training, whatever form that may take, be closely articulated with tourism workers' immediate literacy-related needs. This suggests that developing abilities in dominant tourism literacy practices will certainly have to provide a substantial part of the course. Essentially, the model I suggest would need to be finely balanced between an instrumental perspective that provides skills in dominant practices and a critical approach that focuses on the analysis and meta-understanding of these same practices. A purely critical approach, reminiscent of Freirean models, risks being seen as failing to provide skills that respond to tourism workers' most pressing economic and social concerns (cf. Prinsloo and Breier 1996). This last point brings me back to the NLPN and to Christina's, John's, Sofia's and many other learners' motivations to join the programme. The need to find a balance between access to and critique of dominant literacy practices certainly also applies to any suggestions regarding the future of the NLPN.

It follows from the above that any literacy intervention needs to address the power issues that are engrained in the teaching of literacy itself. Essentially, this means that tourism workers or literacy learners themselves would have to have a substantial input into the design and implementation of their training programme. Rogers et al. (1999) suggest that while the providers' role is to suggest possible options and help learners gain meta-

knowledge of discourses and practices, ultimately, decision-making power has to be with the participants.

A final conclusion to draw from my research, then, is to acknowledge that as much as literacy in everyday life is always embedded in a particular social and ideological context, so is literacy teaching in an evening class or a training course. Coming back to where I started this research – with observations about the many differences between literacies 'inside' and 'outside' – it now emerges that there are some fundamental similarities between literacies in everyday life and literacy in 'literacy programmes'. Both literacy practices 'inside' and literacies 'outside' are always social and ideological, they always touch upon values and identities and they are always part of a context that determines the extent to which each literacy practice is helpful in achieving its users' aims. It is then impossible for policy makers, programme planners and educators to continue to pretend that inside a class or a learning group reading and writing somehow mysteriously turn into a neutral skill that will automatically reap benefits outside for all those who join the programme. To what extent literacy is the 'key to a better future' and what kind of literacies are most likely to be useful keys for whatever better future we imagine, remains an issue of much doubt and debate to which, I hope, studies such as this can contribute.

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ANNEX

1. Timetable of my research activities in Namibia

March 1999: Introductory visit to Namibia in order to discuss my research with DABE (Directorate of Adult Basic Education), the head office of the NLPN. I had preliminary discussions about my research with staff at DABE and at the NLPN's regional office in Windhoek. I also visited several literacy classes in Windhoek and in the area around the capital.

1st period of fieldwork: May to November 1999

May and June 1999 (Windhoek): In May, I spent most time during the week at DABE. During my previous visit in March, I had been introduced to the education officers in the Materials Development Division. When I returned in May, I was given an office in their division. I spent the first four weeks observing and participating in the work of the Division and of DABE. I also had brief meetings with staff of the other divisions that are part of DABE. At the same time, I began to visit literacy classes in Windhoek and Katutura and in the rural area around the country. Because I did not have my own car, whenever I could I accompanied District Literacy Officers on their regular visits to classes. With one exception, I visited all these classes only once.

In June, I began regular observations in two classes at DABE (see below) and in three classes in Katutura.

July/August 1999: After I had bought a car in Cape Town, which I drove up to Windhoek, I set out on a three-week-long trip to the north-eastern parts of Namibia in order to begin my research on tourism. On the way up to the Caprivi, Namibia's far north-eastern province, I visited two literacy classes in Otjiwarongo, a small town about 150 miles north of Windhoek.

In the Caprivi, I visited three community-based tourism projects. I conducted informal interviews with members of these three CBTEs. I also interviewed the owner of a private lodge. Due to an armed attack by the 'Caprivi Liberation Army' on Katima Mulilo, the regional capital, and the closing down of the road to Windhoek in the aftermath of the event, I was forced to drive back to Windhoek via Botswana. As I could not stay in Katima Mulilo, I had to abandon my plans to visit literacy classes in the area.

September to November 1999: After my return to Windhoek, I continued my classroom observations at DABE and in Katutura. Because I now had my own car and could therefore drive to Katutura in the evening, I began to visit Hilda's class on a regular basis, on average twice a week. I also continued to visit Anna's class in the hospital in Katutura, at least once a week.

I continued to work at DABE, focusing mainly on the work of the Materials Development Division. In addition, I began to work in the National Archives, where I read about the history of literacy policy in Namibia, looking in particular at SWAPO's literacy campaign in exile and the beginnings of the NLPN after independence.

In September, I accompanied members of DABE to the official celebrations of National Literacy Day that took place in Lüderitz on 9 September 1999.

In October, I travelled for 10 days to the Kavango region. I spent three days in Rundu, the regional capital, and visited four literacy classes in the town, as well as in a rural settlement 50 miles east of Rundu. During this trip, as well as during all my other trips through the country, I took photographs of tourism signs and signposts and, whenever possible, visited CBTEs.

November 1999 to April 2000: London

I spent four months in London on a preliminary analysis of the data I had collected so far and tried to assess priorities and problems for the next period of fieldwork. I drafted a first version of the theory chapter and wrote a paper about National Literacy Day.

2nd period of fieldwork: April to October 2000

After I arrived in Windhoek, I immediately continued my visits to the literacy classes of the previous year. However, because during the school Easter vacation the literacy classes did not meet, I spent the next three weeks working at DABE. At the same time, I began to set up contacts with local tourism workers in Windhoek. As a result, I began to work with Face-to-Face Tours and with Martha, a crafts vendor in Windhoek.

In July, I travelled to Damaraland in the north-central area of Namibia. I visited CBTEs in Uis, at the Brandberg, at Twyfelfontein, at the Petrified Forest and in Aba Huab.

Back in Windhoek, I began a series of 20 semi-structured interviews with learners from classes in Katutura and at DABE. These interviews were carried out with the help of three interpreters, two for Khoekhoegowab and one for Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga. The interviews were taped and translated

into English. I also interviewed the promoters of the four classes I had visited regularly.

As I followed up on the topics these interviews brought up, I visited shops, banks and the post office. I collected letters and invoices from learners and brochures and application forms from the shops and offices I visited. I interviewed shop assistants, as well as officers at the Municipality and in various Ministries.

In August/September, I spent two weeks in Kaokoveld, in the north-west of Namibia, researching tourism and literacy. On this trip, I was accompanied by a fellow researcher from Germany. We visited several CBTEs in Opuwo and in Epupa where we interviewed local crafts vendors, tour guides and Himba families whose homesteads were visited by tourists. Most of these interviews were conducted with the help of an interpreter.

Back in Windhoek, I continued my research into commercial and bureaucratic literacy practices. My last weeks were spent finishing off interviews with learners and teachers. I also conducted interviews at NATH and NACOBTA.

Other activities: Not listed in the above are the many hours of participant observation at DABE, in classrooms, in shops and on the streets. Also missing are the numerous informal conversations I had with staff at DABE, with learners, with teachers and with many other people whose answers to my questions provided invaluable insights into the many issues that my research tried to address.

2. List of field sites

(This is not an exhaustive list, but covers the main field sites of my research.)

1. Directorate of Adult Basic Education, Ministry of Basic Education and Culture:

This is the central office of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia. My research was facilitated by DABE. Throughout my two periods of fieldwork in Namibia in 1999 and 2000, I had an office at DABE which I used whenever I was in Windhoek. I conducted a series of more structured interviews with members of DABE (see below List of main informants) and I attended several staff meetings and seminars.

2. Literacy classes in Windhoek:

Stage 4 class at DABE: Monica's class (see Chapters 5 and 10). The class met every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 1-3 p.m. in an office at the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture.

Stage 3 class at DABE: another literacy class at DABE. Because this group met at the same time as Monica's class, I did not visit it regularly.

3. Literacy classes in Katutura:

Stage 4 class at Gorengab Junior Secondary School: Hilda's class (see Chapter 10). The class met every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 5-7 p.m. (5-6 p.m. during the winter months).

Stage 3/4 class at the Katutura Stage Hospital: Anna's class (see Chapters 2 and 10)which met Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-3 p.m..

Stage 3 class at Augeikas Primary School: The promoter of this class was Tina. Because the group met at the same time as Hilda's class, I visited Tina's group less frequently than Hilda's. I interviewed several learners from Tina's class.

4. Literacy classes outside Windhoek:

Stage 3 literacy class in Daan Viljoen Game Park: In 1999, I visited this group several times, but because the Daan Viljoen Park is located 10 miles outside of Windhoek and the class met infrequently, I later stopped visiting this class.

5. Community-based tourism enterprises and other tourism facilities in Caprivi:

Lizauli Traditional Village, Mashi Craft Market and Sheshe Craft Market, Masambala Island Lodge

6. Community-based tourism enterprises and other tourism facilities in Damaraland:

Dhaureb Crafts in Uis and Brandberg Tour guides, both belonging to the Brandberg Community Tourism Project, Aba Huab campsite, Khowarib campsite, Anmire Cultural Village

7. Community-based tourism projects and tourism facilities in Kaokoveld:

Kunene Village Rest Camp, Kaoko Information Centre, Epupa campsite

8. Tourism facilities in Kavango:

Suclabo Lodge

9. Community-based tourism enterprises and other tourism facilities in Windhoek:

Face-to-Face Tours, Penduka

10. Shops in Windhoek:

Foschini (clothing)

Jet (clothing)

Beares (furniture)

Lewis (furniture)

Shoprite and Pickn'Pay (supermarkets)

3. List of main informants

(This list is not exhaustive, but includes only the main informants, leaving out many other people who in one way or another have contributed to my research.)

1. DABE:

F. Haingura, education officer, DABE

P. Skryver, education officer, DABE

W. N. Kahivere, head of materials division, DABE

M. Kalimba, director, DABE

A. Nujoma, head of training division, DABE

L. Shaketange, ASDSE, DABE

2. Learners from various literacy classes:

Although all learners agreed to me to use their real names, I decided to use pseudonyms for most of them, with the exception of those whose letters and certificates are printed in Chapters 5, 6 and 10. All the learners listed below lived in Katutura. For each informant, I have added the following information: age, first language, marital status – distinguishing between single, divorced, widowed, married and not married (but living with a partner) –, number of children, occupation. Khoekhoegowab is the language spoken as a mother tongue by both the Nama and the Damara people. I added the ethnic origin of the Khoekhoegowab speaking informants in brackets.

Elizabeth, 56 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Nama), married, 9 children, unemployed when I met her

Albertine, 37 years old, Otjiherero, single, 2 children, domestic worker

Carolina, 54 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Nama), single, 3 children, cleaner

Lisa, 34 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Damara), married, 3 children, domestic worker

Evangeline, 43 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Nama), widowed, 5 children, domestic worker

Hermine, 21 years old, Tsetswana, single, no children, hair dresser (self-employed)

Ana, 45 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Nama), married, 2 children, domestic worker

Emma, 33 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Damara), divorced, 3 children, domestic worker

Magda, 27 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Nama), not married, 3 children, cleaner

Susanna, 31 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Nama), not married, 2 children, domestic worker and selling food from home

Dorothea, 36 years old, Oshindonga, married, 1 child, cleaner

Sofia, 33 years old, Oshindonga, not married, 2 children, cleaner

Irmela, 26 years old, Oshikwanyama, not married, 3 children, cleaner

Aina, 42 years old, Oshikwanyama, not married, 2 children, cleaner

Hertha, 48 years old, Oshikwanyama, married, 3 children, cleaner

Justus, 67 years old, died in spring 2001, Khoekhoegowab (Nama), married, 7 children, retired when I met him

Mariam, 58 years old, Oshikwambi, married, 6 children, cleaner

Christina, 49 years old, Otjiherero, married, 6 children, cleaner

John, 50 years old, Otjiherero, married, 5 children, driver

<u>3. Promoters:</u>

Hilda, 60 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Nama) married, 4 children. Hilda has been a literacy promoter since 1985. Before independence, she worked for an NGO, the Namibian Literacy Programme.

Anna, 22 years old, Oshikwanyama, single, 1 child. She worked as a literacy promoter for the NLPN from May 1999 to May 2000.

Monica, 28 years old, Oshindonga, not married, 1 child. She started to work as a literacy promoter for the NLPN in April 2000.

Matthew, 27 years old, Oshindonga, no children. He began to work as a literacy promoter in June 2000.

4. Tourism workers and members of CBTE:

Face-to-Face Tours (Israel, Philadelphia and Cecilia): all in their early twenties, Otjiherero, lived in Katutura (where they grew up)

Martha, crafts vendor in Windhoek, 55 years old, Oshikwanyama, lived in Katutura

Ben, local tour guide, 28 years old, Brandberg Community Project, Khoekhoegowab (Damara)

Monica, manager, Anmire Traditional Village, 35 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Damara)

Raphael and *John*, local tour guides, Epupa, 21 and 23 years old, Otjiherero

Elisabeth, manager, Dhaureb Crafts, Uis, 36 years old, Khoekhoegowab (Damara)

5. Other informants:

Gabriel, tour guide, Petrified Forest

Rita, manager, Kunene Village Restcamp, Opuwo

A. Davidson, NACOBTA

I. Klein, NATH

C. Barker, Personnel Officer, Ministry of Basic Education, Culture and Sport

M. Johannes, Housing Officer, Windhoek Municipality

M. Kaseba, PTO Officer, Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation

S. Muremi, Regional Literacy Officer, NLPN, Rundu

H. Nakemo, District Literacy Officer, Windhoek

H. Guiseb, administrative clerk, Ministry of Local and Regional Government and Housing

J. Kakondo, District Literacy Officer, Otjiwarongo

M. Oumeb, Regional Education Officer, Windhoek

A. Ondulani, Council of Churches Namibia, Windhoek

L. Aipinge, Education Officer, DABE

E. Brown, Senior Education Officer, DABE

J. Ellis, Under-secretary, Education, MBEC

M. Mkono, Deputy Director, DABE

J. Jeremiah-Namene, Evaluation Division, DABE

R. wa-Kahamise, Regional Literacy Officer, Windhoek

4. Interview schedules

1. Interviews with learners of the NLPN:

Below is a list of questions which I used as a schedule for my interviews. However, each interview was unique and I always formulated questions on the spot depending on how the conversation developed. Not all the topic included in this list were discussed in each interview.

Personal information: name, age, marital status, children

Where do you come from and where do you live now?

Have you been to school? If yes, for how long (which standard/grade)?

Where did you learn to read and write?

Do you have a job? Is it a full-time or a part-time job?

Do you have to read and write when you work? Are there any particular situations at work where you have to read or write?

Do you have to speak English at work? If yes, how often? When?

Do your children go to school?

Do you sometimes receive letters or notes from your children's school or from their teachers?

Do your children often ask you to help them with their homework? If yes, what do you do to help them? Do you find it difficult to help them?

Do you have a post-box? Do you receive letters? Do you write letters? From whom do you receive letters and to whom do you write?

Do you sometimes receive official letters? Do you receive invoices?

Do you have a telephone at home? Or, do you use public telephones or go to phone shops?

Do you have a radio or a television?

Where do you do your shopping? Can you describe how you do your shopping? How do you know what you need to buy and how much money you need for what you want to buy?

Do you have a bank account? When you go to the bank, do you have to use forms like deposit slips?

Do you have any books or magazines at home? (Bible, schoolbooks, etc.)

Can you think of any other situations in everyday life where you have to read and write?

If you think about a normal day, the things you do every day, when do you speak English? When do you speak Afrikaans, when do you use your own language? Can you think about particular situations where you have to speak English?

What do you do when you or your children are sick? What language do the nurses and doctors in the hospital speak? Is there anything you have to write, for example, is there a form you have to fill out? What about the health passport? Who writes in it? What do you do when the doctors give you a prescription?

Since when do you attend the literacy classes?

Why did you decide to join the programme? What do you want to learn?

Do you like the classes? What do you like about the classes?

Tell me about the things you don't like.

What have you learned? What has changed since you started attending the classes?

What do you think about your teacher? Do you like the way s/he teaches?

What do you think about the exams? Do you want to sit the exams?

What is the most important thing that you want to get from the classes? What do you want to achieve?

Why do you think education is important?

What are your plans and wishes for your future?

<u>2. Interviews with tourism workers and members of community-based tourism enterprises</u>

Personal information

General information about the CBTE: when was it founded, who founded it

How many visitors do you have on average per day?

Who had the idea for the enterprise? How did you decide on the product (campsite, guiding, traditional village, etc.)?

Did anybody help you to set up the enterprise? Was it developed in co-operation with an NGO, with a local government body or with a private business?

What were the things you found most difficult when you set up the business? What would you say are the things you knew the least about?

Did you get any training, support, advice? If yes, from whom (individuals, friends, local community, NGO, etc.)

How many people are involved in the CBTE? With how many members did you start, how many are left today? What are the functions/roles of the different members/employees?

Who runs the CBTE? Do you have a committee or is there a manager?

Did you apply for a PTO? Was that a difficult process? Did anybody help you with the application?

What is the educational background of your members? What languages do you speak? What is your mother tongue?

What are the biggest difficulties you face in developing and running the business?

In your opinion, what could be done to help you with these problems?

What are the most important things you need to know in order to run this business? What do you think are the skills and knowledge you lack? What kind of training would you like to have?

How did you collect the information about local culture, surroundings, etc.?

Did you speak to the elders in your community? What information did they provide? Did they tell you a lot of things you yourself no longer knew about?

What other sources of information did you have (school, schoolbooks, other books, tourists, researchers)?

How did you learn to present the information to the tourists? How do you know what they enjoy, what is interesting to them? How did you cope with the language (e.g. translating knowledge in local languages into English)?

Did you ever write down any of the information you gathered? Do you keep on learning/gathering new information? Do you write it down? How do the different guides work together? Do you inform each other about new things you have learned?

Do you find it difficult to work with the tourists? Can you explain what is difficult about working with tourists?